

What's Happening

IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 11, NO 7 MARCH 2010

The Anne Frank Tree Lives On

Anne Frank was a teenager during World War II. Because her family was Jewish, they had to hide from the Nazis. For 25 months they lived in an upstairs room. From there she could see a beautiful chestnut tree that became a symbol of hope for her. Now that tree is dying, but Sonoma State University has gotten a sapling from it.

While her family was in hiding in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Anne Frank wrote a famous diary. It is called *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. The Nazis were sending Jews away to concentration camps. During the Holocaust they killed six million Jews. Her diary describes the fear that she and her family felt, and the hope that she clung to.

The tree that Anne Frank saw was a tall, strong horse chestnut tree. She could see its branches through a skylight in the roof. She described the dew that collected on them, and said that it glistened like silver. It brought her some joy and hope that life could return to normal someday.

The Anne Frank Tree has become one of the oldest chestnut trees in Amsterdam. It is now at least 150 years old. Unfortunately, experts discovered in 2005 that it has a disease, sudden oak death. Because of that they must cut the tree down in the next few years.

The Anne Frank House is now a museum in Amsterdam. Its idea was to

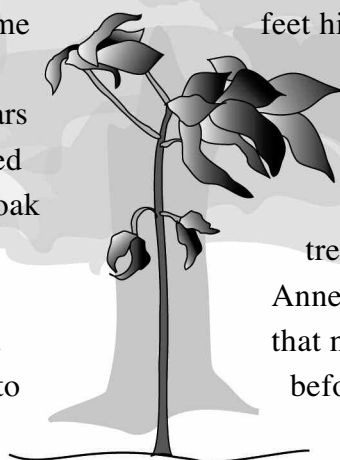
germinate chestnuts from the tree and grow 150 saplings. The museum has been donating the saplings to places around the world. Most of them have a connection to Anne Frank or the Holocaust. Many schools that are

named after her are getting one, for example.

Eleven of the saplings are going to the United States. The only place in California is Sonoma State University. It offers students classes in which they study the Holocaust and other genocides, the mass killings of people. On the campus there is also a spot that is dedicated to the victims and survivors of those killings. In three years the university will plant the sapling there too.

Now the sapling is only 18 inches tall. The head of landscaping for the university is an expert in plant diseases. He will keep it in a special shade house. That will protect it from rain, insects and rodents. By the time he plants it, he will be certain that the tree is completely healthy.

The tree will grow to almost 100 feet high. Even though the old horse chestnut tree in Amsterdam is dying, the new one on Sonoma State's campus will live on. The university will put a sign near the tree. It will have a quotation from Anne Frank's diary: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."



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BIOGRAPHY

ELAINE LEEDER

DEAN, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL STUDIES, SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Elaine Leeder's father fled the Nazis in Lithuania in 1939. Later they killed his whole family. That history filled her family's home with sadness and fear. For many years now

Elaine has tried to teach others about the Holocaust. As a dean at Sonoma State University, she helped to get the sapling from Anne Frank's favorite tree.

In school Elaine was not a great student, but she knew how to build relationships. She made friends with kids that others ignored. Because her parents were outsiders, she understood outsiders. When she went to college, she studied Sociology to learn about human behavior.

Elaine worked her way through college. At Northeastern University she could study for ten weeks, then work for ten weeks. In the 1960s she got involved in social protests too. She attended anti-war rallies, and once she marched with Martin Luther King.

Dr. Leeder has earned degrees in Social Work, Public Health, and Sociology. In New York and California her work always related to the dark sides of people's lives. She has studied alcoholism, mental illness and domestic violence. For five years she has lead a self-help program for prisoners at San Quentin Prison.

Travel has been important to Dr. Leeder. She enjoys going to exotic places like Hawaii and

Vietnam. In 1992 and 1999 she sailed around the world as a teacher in a program called "Semester at Sea." She also has spent time in Africa, and a family in Zimbabwe even adopted her.



"I've always been drawn to the underdog."

In New York Dr. Leeder taught classes about the Holocaust and other genocides. Then she went to Sonoma State in 2001. After a few years there she had the idea to create a memorial on campus. That became the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove, which opened in 2009. Trees there line a peaceful lake. A sculpture honors victims and survivors. It also recognizes people around the world who teach about and fight for human rights.

Several colleagues told Dr. Leeder about the Anne Frank saplings. They all agreed to apply for one. She has been to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and she knew about the horse chestnut tree there. She is looking forward to having it as a symbol of hope in the Memorial Grove.

Elaine Leeder does lots of things for fun. She gardens, swims and goes to the movies. However, the big part of her identity is this: She is child of a survivor of the Holocaust. Her father never talked about it, but she does. She wants people to understand the evil that leads to genocides. She also holds on to the hope that humans will fight that evil wherever it appears in the world.

Background Information

The German secret police found Anne Frank, her family and a few friends in August 1944. Anne died of typhus at age 15 in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. That was in March 1945, just weeks before British liberated the camp.

A woman named Miep Gies had worked for Mr. Frank. She helped to hide the family from the Nazis, and she is responsible for having saved the diary. Ms. Gies died at age 100 on January 11, 2010.

The diary was published in 1947. It has been translated into approximately 67 languages and has sold more than 30 million copies. In 2009 UNESCO announced that Anne Frank's manuscripts have been included in its Memory of the World Register, the World Heritage List for documents.

Workers in Amsterdam have put up braces and supports to prevent the Anne Frank Tree from falling. Experts believe that it might survive only another five years.

Sonoma State University has held a lecture series about the Holocaust and genocides for 30 years. It also hosts reunions of Holocaust survivors.

The memorial on Sonoma State University's campus is the Erna and Arthur Salm Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove. It was completed in March 2009. The sculpture there has 45 feet of railroad tracks that lead to, and nearly meet at, a 12-foot, illuminated glass tower. A quotation from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stands at the base of the tower: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Sonoma State's Memorial Grove honors survivors and victims of genocides, such as the Native American Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, the Jewish Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide, and the ongoing genocide in Darfur.

The Anne Frank Center USA in New York got the eleven saplings for planting in the U.S. The other planting sites are the White House; the Children's Museum of Indianapolis; Southern Cayuga School District (New York); Washington State Holocaust Resource Center; the Boston Common; Central High School (Little Rock, Arkansas); the Holocaust Memorial Center; the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial; the William J. Clinton Foundation; and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- Tell what you know about Anne Frank.

Comprehension:

- Why has the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam grown saplings and given them away?

Beyond the Text:

- Why do you suppose seeing the chestnut tree gave Anne Frank such hope and joy?
- What kind of meaning might the quotation from Anne Frank have for you?
- Why do people write diaries?

Vocabulary

Article-specific: Nazi; sapling; diary; concentration camp; Holocaust; to germinate

High-use: symbol; to cling (to); to glisten; to donate; to dedicate; survivor; landscaping

Sources

San Francisco Chronicle February 3, 2010

Santa Rosa Press Democrat October 18, 2009

New York Times October 15, 2009

Anne Frank Center USA www.annefrank.com

Anne Frank House Amsterdam www.annefrank.org

Sonoma State University www.sonoma.edu

CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English - Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development / Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking

History-Social Science

10.8; 10.10; 11.7