

## Louis and Lynn Baars, and their daughter Leah Baars

Wartime Experience: Hiding and working underground in Holland

Louis J. Baars was born in Amsterdam, Holland on October 9, 1911, into an Orthodox middle-class family. He was the youngest of three brothers. Lynn Baars-Roselaar was born in Amsterdam on February 3, 1916, the fourth child of a family of five. She had two older brothers and one older and one younger sister.

Louis graduated from a school of architecture in 1933 and worked in architectural offices until May 1940, when Holland was overrun by the German army in five days. Lynn worked as a legal secretary from 1933 until 1942. They met in a Jewish Youth Organization and got engaged in 1937. Because times were difficult the marriage was postponed until July 1942, when Louis was summoned for deportation to a so-called "labor camp" in Germany. They decided to marry since it was rumored that married couples could stay together.

All Jews were forced to live in the Jewish quarter with an 8 p.m. curfew, at which time trucks arrived to take Jews away from their homes. These *Razzias*, or raids in which Jews were rounded up to be deported, started in February 1942. Although most Jews were taken away at night, they could be picked up anywhere and at any time. They were processed through the *Schouwburg*, originally a large theater which now functioned as a temporary jail, and from there to the concentration camps. Of the 140,000 Jews in Holland at the outbreak of the war, it is estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 survived.

Louis' father was the first in the family to be deported. His brothers were deported in 1943, as was his mother. None survived. Lynn's brothers and sisters were also deported, together with their spouses and two boys. Her father died in 1942 from a heart attack when the *Razzias* started, and her mother was saved as a result of hiding with her and Louis.

When the *Razzias* erupted, it became essential to avoid deportation. Louis got a temporary exemption as a teacher at the Jewish vocational school, however both he and Lynn were rounded up three times. In each instance, they were able to escape. Lynn worked in the *Creche*, an annex to the Jewish *Schouwburg*. She cared for children under twelve who were taken from their mothers who were being held at the *Schouwburg* prior to deportation. She also tried to keep the children away from the *Schouwburg* once their parents were gone, so that they would not be deported too. In these efforts she was not alone. Lynn and those involved went for "walks," and scouted for places to hide the children. In September 1943, the last *Razzia* took place during the night of *Rosh Hashanah*. Officially, no Jews remained in Holland after that.

Louis and Lynn were able to escape the *Razzia* of September against all odds. Louis had built a hiding place in a dropped ceiling in their house and while Lynn and her mother hid there during the *Razzia*, he hid in a large closet under a pile of clothing. Afterwards, Lynn was hidden by the *concierge* in the office building where she once worked, and a week later Louis joined her.

These were all temporary measures, for the Underground was trying to find safe havens for them somewhere away from Amsterdam.

Lynn was five months into her pregnancy when a hiding place was found for her in the south of Holland. After a short time this place became unsafe and she was brought to a convent in Ravenstein, directly south of the Meuse River, where Leah was born on February 10, 1944. Louis was hiding three miles away, and sometimes visited them at night. After six weeks in the convent the baby's birth became known, and they had to move again. After that they were hidden in the barn of a little farm, where Louis had already found refuge along with several other Jews. Leah "was supposed to be" the daughter of the family with whom they stayed, for it was too risky for a baby to be in hiding. They were freed in the south of Holland on September 17, 1944, while the north of Holland was not freed until May 1945. The family immigrated to the United States in 1958 and currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The *Memorboek* Louis holds in his hand contains the history of the Jews in the Netherlands from the Middle Ages through 1945.