

New book recounts survivor's hidden childhood

Written by Barbara Bayer
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Now, 60-plus years later, Cardozo has written a book titled "a child underground" about his experiences.

The book was recently published by Peter Sasburg of Holland in the Dutch language under the title "een kind in het donker." The English version, "a child underground," should be available in the United States by mid-June. It will sell for \$15 and will be for sale on the Web site www.maxcardozo.com, Amazon.com and at Barnes & Noble.

Born in January 1937 in Amsterdam, Cardozo was just a toddler when the Nazis invaded Holland in May 1940. Still, Cardozo recalls enough to know that just being on the street at night put his family at risk.

Cardozo's parents were active in the Dutch resistance movement. Following a rash of deportations in the summer of 1942, Cardozo's parents decided that it was time for the family to go into hiding. Originally, the family of four stayed together. Soon, however, the family had to split up. By the time the Germans withdrew from Holland on May 9, 1945, Max Cardozo had changed hiding places six times, having been helped by five families (one twice). Max's brother, Ido, who is eight years older than Max, moved more than 20 times during that three-year period.

Today, Max Cardozo writes, "For me the Holocaust was relatively painless. I suffered only because I became separated from my family. I was constantly fearful of what was to become of us, and I suffered the trauma of losing so many family members."

After the war, Cardozo's family prospered. At the age of 15, he was sent to school in England. But he was still a Dutch citizen, and when it came time for Cardozo to be drafted by the Dutch army, he didn't want to serve. He felt the Dutch army was still "rife with undercurrents of anti-Semitism."

Instead, because Cardozo was fluent in French, English and Dutch, he sought an opportunity to serve as a translator for the U.S. Army. Through that avenue, he came to the United States in 1955. While he was stationed in New Jersey, he met a "nice young lady," Lenore, who soon became his wife.

Throughout his life, Cardozo -- a retired businessman who ran several businesses in the Kansas City area, including Papa Chen's Express and the five-store chain of flower shops called Roses Only - said he was haunted by "monster-nightmares" like the ones he had when he was 5. Unable to sleep well at night, eventually he suffered a nervous breakdown. His psychologist suggested "the glass" in his head "was full" and that Cardozo should relieve the pressure by putting his memories down on paper.

Cardozo originally wrote out his memories by hand on yellow notepads. He even posted an article about his aunt on the World Wide Web. At that time, while Cardozo was living in Costa Rica during the 1990s, he didn't know what else he would do with his notes.

Ready to write

Cardozo still has family living in Holland and visits them several times a year. On a visit in 1995, he and his brother decided to set out to document some of his hazy memories. Together they visited people who helped them during the war, revisited various places and met with Dutch officials.

At that point, Max Cardozo was ready to write a book. He chose to have it published in Dutch first because "the whole story played in Holland, and people in the book were dying, and many of those people don't speak English." He actually wrote the book in English, and then Ingrid

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Keijzer, the great-granddaughter of the last family that hid Cardozo when he was a boy, translated it into Dutch. Ghostwriter Steven Collins helped Cardozo with the manuscript.

The Cardozos returned to Kansas City in 2005 to be near their three children and four grandchildren.

Still a world traveler, Cardozo always visits Holland in May so that he can commemorate that nation's memorial day (May 4) by "laying flowers on the graves of fallen soldiers and those who took part in the resistance." While he was in Holland this year, he also did some book signings. He estimates he autographed more than 300 copies, and thinks about 1,000 books have already been sold in Holland.

He didn't enter into this venture to make money. He wanted his story to be told.

"If it were up to me, I'd give it away," Cardozo said.

Now that the book has been published, Cardozo said, he would like to visit schools and universities to make sure young people understand what happened, because he's worried it will happen again.

"I'm deathly afraid that in 2030 things will repeat themselves," Cardozo said.