

Just opposite SS headquarters...



LYDIA AND JOHANNES HUYGENS

Just opposite SS headquarters in Utrecht in Holland, 5 Jews were hiding. Hyman and Miep Degens with their 12-year-old daughter, Lenie, occupied one room and, later, Miep's sister, Beppie Dresden, and her husband, Barend, the other.

Under these rooms, were Lydia and Johannes Huygens' apartment and their hairdressing business. From 1942 – 4, Johannes and Lydia lived dangerously. During the day, it was business as usual downstairs. Johannes and his staff worked in the salon, while Lydia looked after the apartment and her infant daughter.

The 3 families spent the evenings together, but with the blinds closed, so that the Gestapo across the street could not see in! In case of danger, Johannes had created 2 secret hiding places: one in the cellar through a false panel in the wall and the other through the back of a wardrobe.

Johannes' hairdressing skills proved to be invaluable. He dyed young Lenie's hair red to hide her Jewish appearance, allowing her to go to the beach with the Huygens family and later, on a brief holiday to Lydia's parents. More importantly, he would exchange haircuts for the extra food now required.

They knew full well the risks they were taking, but at no time felt fear. Their courage and bravery has seen them honoured as Righteous Among the Nations.

Courage to care