

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times
DISCOVERIES
By Susan Salter Reynolds
January 25, 2009

A Hidden Life
A Memoir of August 1969
Johanna Reiss
Melville House: 217 pp., \$24.95

Johanna Reiss wrote one memoir, then discovered another hidden underneath. The first, "The Upstairs Room," which describes the 2 1/2 years she hid from Nazis in a farmhouse attic in Holland, was a Newbery Honor winner for young adults. Reiss was encouraged to write it, and return to Holland in 1969, by her American husband. While she was there with her daughters, her husband, 37, killed himself. "A Hidden Life" is that second story, moving between 1940s Holland and 1960s New York City. "How do you tell children," she thinks, "that life is one continuous goodbye, that with each day the end comes a little nearer . . .; how do you explain that people you're close to, or thought you were, can just vanish?"

susan.reynolds@latimes.com