

## Knud Dyby

Wartime Experience: Danish Policeman and Rescuer of Jews

Note: He is the only Rescuer photographed

“In order to be a saboteur and a member of the underground, I think you had to be adventuresome – or you had to be an inventor; you had to be a little of everything. Also, a fighter. And of course, you had to have a certain kind of dislike of the occupiers -of the Germans, or the Gestapo, and so it was very easy to participate in anti-German activities”

“In wartime, either you have an enemy or you have a friend. And fortunately, there were more friends than enemies”

“I was able to help Jewish families, many Danish saboteurs, politicians, German deserted, Baltic refugees and British and American Airmen to avoid being captured by Gestapo by being taken by boats to freedom in our neighbor country Sweden. I was just fortunate enough to be at the right place at the right time, at the age of 25. I never considered myself being a hero for what I did. However, I’m speaking for friends, who were not as fortunate as I, but were caught and suffered or died in the hands of Gestapo.”

“We had scouts at all then entrance to the harbors, who warned us every time a Gestapo unit was near. We were extremely nervous every time we sent a boat away and naturally happy, when we had reports that the fishing boats were safely back in the morning.”

Knud Dyby was born in Randers, Denmark in 1915. Like many other Danish citizens, he played a role in the transport of Danish Jews to Sweden. He was an active participant in the underground throughout the years of German occupation, 1940- 1945. Mr. Dyby was a Danish royal Guard, a Danish Policeman and a member of the Danish/Swedish Refugee Service.

As a member of the Danish police, he was able to take an active role in resisting Nazi occupation. Although technically the Police reported to the Nazis, they were nonetheless able to maintain some degree of compliance with the Resistance Movement, through at great personal risk. In 1941, Dyby was reported to German authorities for his resistance work and was forced to go into hiding under an assumed name. In 1944, 2,200 members of the Danish police force were arrested by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps.

Through the network of the Danish/Swedish Refugee Service, the Resistance transported Jews, Allied Airmen, German deserters and Resistance workers to safety, as well as bringing in intelligence, munitions and goods. 19,000 Danish refugees were taken to safety in Sweden, including 7,500 Jews. Despite great personal danger, Mr. Dyby worked diligently against Nazi interests. Because of a personal interest in boating, he had many contracts at the Copenhagen harbor, which helped him to arrange transportation. Like so many other Danish citizens, he

modestly attributes his own acts of courage and caring to a common sense of humanity. Danes, like Dyby, regarded Danish Jews as fellow Danish citizens who deserved to be treated equally.

Many of the refugees were taken to Sweden on fishing boats, since most private ships were banned by the Germans. The fishermen were allowed to keep their vessels because the Germans relied on their catch and other Danish produce to feed the troops. Another factor that helped in the rescue effort was that the Coast Guard was maintained by the Danish Police Department. Other factors such as Denmark's proximity to Sweden were instrumental in allowing for the success of the rescue operation. The Resistance Movement was very organized and elaborate in arranging all aspect of the transports—coded messages were used to communicate details about voyages. On the fishing boats the refugees were often hidden under the floorboards or underneath fishnets. A laboratory in Copenhagen concocted a powder, which stopped the scent of the Germans' search dogs. Children making the journey were often sedated in order to keep their crying from attracting German attention.

The winter weather is normally bad and the evenings quite dark. This is one of the reasons that the Danes at many different places and in many different boats and some larger ships were able to rescue more than seven thousand Jews. When they returned to Denmark after the war, they found that their homes and businesses had been cared for by Danish citizens.

Dyby immigrated to the United States in 1946 and lives in Novato California. He is a retired printer, designer and inventor. He did not speak publicly about his war experiences until 1985; now, he is a frequent speaker, locally and nationally. He has been honored and acknowledged by both the Jewish and international communities.

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### **Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris**

Knud DYBY né en 1915 à RANDERS (DANEMARK)

JUSTE , Resistant

Il a joué un rôle important pour conduire en SUEDE les Juifs persécutés pendant l'occupation allemande 1940/45. Membre de la police danoise, il a résisté à l'occupant nazi. En 1941 il est obligé de se cacher sous un faux nom. En 1944, 2 200 membres de la police danoise seront arrêtés par les nazis et déportés dans les camps de concentration. 19 000 réfugiés au DANEMARK et conduits en SUEDE sur des bateaux de pêche, seront sauvés dont 7 500 juifs. Sur les bateaux, pendant la journée, les enfants restaient calmes pour ne pas attirer l'attention des Allemands. Mr DYBY a émigré aux USA en 1946. Après 1985, il a été honoré et reconnu par la communauté juive internationale. Il ne s'est jamais considéré comme un héros.