

Today is Tuesday, September 18, 1984. I am Katherine Rabinovitz, and I am interviewing Knud Dyby, who is a participant in the conference Faith in Humankind, Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust. What is your complete name?

Knud Dyring Dyby-- K-N-U-D D-Y-R-I-N-G, and then D-Y-B-Y.

Where and when were you born?

I am born in Denmark on 28th of March 1915.

Did you and your family belong to any particular church?

Most Danes are Lutherans, and so were we.

How often did your family attend?

A maximum of twice a year.

Were they involved in politics in any way?

No.

Did you or your parents discuss among yourselves or your family and friends what was happening to the Jews during the beginnings of the war?

Yes, we did. Very much.

Was there any specific incident that you can think of that first made you aware of the persecution of the Jews?

We had many, many reports in our newspapers in Denmark, and especially in the underground newspapers. Yeah, I mean, if you're talking after 1940, before 1940, I was occasionally traveling in Germany, and we knew what was happening. I was a yachtsman, and I sailed a yacht. I sailed yachts outside of Kiel.

What year? Can you give us the date--

1937, '38.

Entered Denmark?

Denmark on the 9th of April 1940.

OK. When the Germans entered, at that time, did you see any persecution of Jews?

No, none, none at all in the beginning. When did you see any persecution?

Denmark was treated in a very, very special way by Germany. And we even had our own military and police force, and our own government, and the King was still there. And until 1943, there wasn't any persecution of Jews in Denmark.

When did you decide that you were going to help?

At the time of when we-- on the, I think 28th and 29th of September 1943, in the evening, when we heard that a contingency of German soldiers was sent up to Denmark to, so to speak, was going to take care, as they said, of the Jewish problem in Denmark.

I like to get a little story in here, and that is the fact is that they were talking about the Danish King Christian X as they served as a guardsman, that he wore a yellow star. None-- no Jews in Denmark wore yellow stars. But what the King and the government actually did was, at the time Himmler and Hitler told the Danish government in '43 that it would help us solve the Jews problem, the King and the government cabled back, "We don't have any Jewish problem." And that was the attitude all the way. And that was the time we found out, I mean, to get back to your question, about late September 1943.

Had you been involved in an underground movement of any kind before that?

Yes, I was involved in some small sabotage acts, and mostly in collecting-- [AUDIO OUT]

[INAUDIBLE] You can continue.

Collecting weapons for some of the underground organizations. And as a printer, I was trying to make photo engravings for some of the underground newspapers that were done in letterpress printing. Most of them were duplicated.

What made you begin helping the Jews?

The simple fact that, as I told you, we didn't have a Jewish problem in Denmark. And the reason I helped was that they were, somehow or ever, I mean, they were countrymen of ours. They were our neighbors, our friends. And I was only too happy to help them.

And also, Denmark has always been a very independent, freedom-loving, and humane country. And as such, we couldn't sit still and see-- well, I couldn't at least, and a lot of Danes couldn't, sit still and see what happened, because we had these reports already, what happened to the Jews in Germany and what the Germans did.

Could you describe the ways in which you helped Jews to escape?

I was on the-- [AUDIO OUT]

Turn around.

OK, you can continue again.

Either 29th of September or the 1st of October, a friend of mine at the-- I-- then put it this way. I have to tell you that I was in the police department at that time, first a guardsmen. And then they wanted the people from the guards-- from the guards regiment to join the police force. And I was a policeman at the-- in Copenhagen. That is, in Frederiksberg in Denmark.

And one of my friends came in, and he said, you know something about boating and sailing. And there are some people that we have to get to Sweden. And I went up to the police commissioner and I asked him whether I could just take a couple of hours off. And he said, if you have to, you certainly are entitled to take a few hours off. And if you need the police car for any purpose, that I-- [AUDIO OUT]

You just go ahead and let me know.

After that, we met with some friends of ours who knew some Jewish people that wanted to, partly, leave their apartments and partly would like to get to Sweden. And we arranged, instead of using cabs or taxi cabs, we arranged for them to go by streetcars out to a certain destination outside-- [AUDIO OUT]

--fishing port of Copenhagen. It was a strange sight once in a while because they knew they were leaving their homes and they tried to get as much with them as possible. Sometimes we had to tell them to go down and hide the suitcases with some of their neighbors because we just could not transport that in our small boats.

And we took them down to-- some fishermen that I knew from being in a yachting sport, we, in the early summer, we painted our boats at the same time. And we had a few beers together. And they were more than willing to take a few trips to Sweden.

In the beginning, there was, unfortunately, some money involved. The fishermen, of course, not going out fishing, we knew we had to pay them. And-- [AUDIO OUT]

Oh, we have plenty of-- OK.

Partly, you may say that the fishermen got a little greedy. But also, some of the Jewish people were actually trying to show the fishermen too much money, and they wanted to go over as fast as possible. However, this problem was very, very easily solved later on, because we didn't go into the Swedish ports later on, but we met Swedish fishing boats and Navy boats on the way between Denmark and Sweden, and did not have to go into Swedish ports.

Also, in Swedish ports were occasionally people that would report back to the Germans if they had seen a certain-- a certain fishing boat come in too often. I think that was the-- most of the question you asked.

Can you describe a little bit more in detail exactly-- you helped one-- how many groups you helped, if all the procedures were the same.

I would say that in the very early days of October, there was such a rush of people coming down that we-- I mean, we didn't even know their names. We knew-- I still have some thank-you notes from-- not from the Jews, but from some of their neighbors that took them down to the-- to us to-- to us to get them to Sweden. And these people came back and reported when they had heard from the neighbors that everything was OK.

One of the reasons, naturally, that we couldn't take their names down was that we wouldn't want to be caught with them later. And being short of memory as well, I can only remember three or four families, or where they came from in Copenhagen. Yeah, that's about.

Do you know the methods--

Let me put it this way. I think that in those days, the small fishing boats took over-- [AUDIO OUT]

Several hundred people, and I feel I was involved maybe with 30 or 40 myself that I took down on street cars and gave over to the fishermen.

Do you know how the fishermen-- if the fishermen hid them in the boats?

At that time, we had-- actually, the reason we could do it was that-- [AUDIO OUT]

That being a policeman, I knew the so-called coast police we had at that time. And they, again, knew where the German patrol vessels would be around the port and around the sound-- Oresund. And by doing that, it was pretty safe that we knew the boat could come over without being boarded of the German patrols.

On occasion where we had either saboteurs or people that would be very dangerous to get over, we might-- we would go over at night and hide the people under the floorboards. That also happened in the case of some Jewish people. But most of the time, they could be in the cabin, and the fishermen knew their ways around the German patrol boats.

Did anyone in your family know what you were doing?

No, not really.

Were you married at the time?

No.

No.

Did, besides family members, did anyone in the police force that you were working with, did they-- did anyone else know what you were doing?

Yes. We actually had a group of people that knew what I was doing, and also corroborating with some other people.

Did you get any kind of monetary assistance for what you were doing?

Personally, never. I received-- actually, I received my pay as a policeman. Even after the police were interned by the Germans, we still had our policeman salary come into our bank. Also, because I actually didn't have an apartment-- I lived about at least 12 or 14 different places. So I didn't have any rent to worry about.

Later on, when we only took occasional refugees over to Sweden, they were paid by the boats that came out from the Swedish side by Danish-Swedish refugee organization. And they again were paid by the Danish Jews that came to Sweden, started by an attorney, Philipson, in Stockholm. And they had a budget later on to help not only the refugees, but the whole organization was actually paid by the Jewish people in Sweden.

And we worked out so that the fishermen only got-- for one trip, they had 500 kroner, which is today only \$50. At that time, it was more than that. But we, at all times, tried to hold it down, but we had to give the fishermen enough to exist and to buy equipment that they need.

And also, the Swedish government were good enough later on to let us have oil and gas. Well, it was actually petroleum for the motors.

Are there any members of your group who helped you rescue the Jews still alive?

I left Denmark in 1946, and had very little time. I was working on a patent for photoengraving. And I had very little time to go over the underground organization. And I know some of them are probably still alive, but I don't think I have contact with these people, whereas the organization in Sweden, on the Swedish side, I have had contact with for many years.

What could have happened to you if the Germans found out you were helping the Jews?

Most-- because they had me reported on many anti-German activities, I'm sure I would have been a member on one of their concentration camps.

But to your knowledge, they never found out.

I was too busy to wait for them. I had something to do all the time, and I seemed to have a knack for not-- I mean, I have several calls where they were close to getting in touch with me, but I escaped.

Did you ever personally know the people that you helped and have any kind of contact with them after the war?

In fact, I-- yeah, I do know some that-- still. But none of the families that we took over the first week of October, I really didn't know them. But later on, we had saboteurs and single refugees that we-- I knew very well, and some editors of the various Danish papers and underground workers and American flyers.

Did you experience this during the war, whether helping Jews or flyers, affect your religious beliefs and your political involvement?

Neither of the two. It has nothing to do. Just good morale, I guess.

Were your attitudes different 40 years ago than they are today?

No.

OK. Is there anything that you can think of that we haven't discussed?

Yeah, a lot of things. [LAUGHS]

OK. [AUDIO OUT]

Could you explain-- well, you just told me off the tape that it wasn't as dangerous to take the Jews out of Denmark as it was later on to take others out. Why was that the case?

It seemed to me, and I think to many other people, that again, Denmark was treated much, much better than some of the other countries, like Holland, or Belgium, or Norway. And it seemed as if either the Danish food, or the smiles, or whatever, even if people absolutely did not cooperate with Germans, that the Germans behaved better when they come up in our surroundings.

And especially, I must say that the Navy people, who are more international minded than Gestapo, were not too hard to go around. And it was only in the-- it was more in 1944, the end of 1944 and 1945, where the underground actually fought the Germans, that we had very much of a problem using our boats to Sweden and getting people-- force them back.

I hate to say anything good about the Germans about that time, but we did have less of a problem than they would in Holland or Belgium. Also, we might have better organizations. And the Germans seemed to be interested in the fact that the whole society was working. And doing that, we could easier get around the tasks that we wanted to do.

Thank you.

Would you please tell us the story about the refugees?

Yeah, I mean, the story. When Gestapo became more interested in the traffic out or in and out of the port of Copenhagen, at one point we found that the Gestapo would take their German Shepherd dogs down on the ship to sniff out whether we had any passengers on board. And in no time, our connections from Sweden and Denmark concocted a mixture of blood albumin and quinine powder. And as soon as the dogs got a sniff of that powder, which was spread on the deck, they would lose their sense of smell completely.

Also, in other cases, we had to hide people. Many people came over via the beer routes from the brewery Wiibroe in Elsinore to the coast of Sweden. In fact, the destination of the ships were Bornholm, the Danish Island in the Baltic. And we would-- all the Jews people would be hidden between the beer cases, and not show up on the deck until they could see Sweden.

But that was, as I said, that was in the small boats. That was the Danish-Swedish refugee organization. The reason I am mentioning it here is the fact that without the little daily contacts we had on our mail, going forth and back, and our messages, we would be out of luck in meeting some of the Swedish boats that would take off the refugees for us.

You want to tell a story about Larsen--

Tordenskjoldsgade. Yes, one of our fisherman, Larsen, who occasionally took over refugees, and also, I mean, definitely took over refugees in October, November 1943, unfortunately was arrested by Gestapo. And he did not-- he was not sent to Germany, but was imprisoned in Copenhagen.

When the German-- or let me put it this way. The night that he was going to leave in the morning with all the mail and all the information for Sweden, a friend of mine, Blixen-Finecke, and I went down to see Larsen at his place. And I told him that the night looks beautiful, Larsen. And let's go down and fill up the boat tonight.

But Larsen said no. I have my nephew, and he's OK. He's one of us. And we'll go down in the morning.

I said, yeah, you better think it over, Larsen, because tonight looks fine to me. But he insisted that he wanted to stay home and take the mail and all the information over in the morning.

However, I heard later from our informants that Larsen in the morning, at 6 o'clock, together with his nephew, walked down the street where he lives. And all of a sudden, around the corner came three German guardsmen with their machine guns.

And Larsen became nervous, and together with the nephew, they jumped into a hallway close to the street. And of course, the Germans had, unfortunately, had seen them and arrested them. And for some time, we had to be very, very careful because they had an awful lot of information in the material that they received.

After that I arranged-- I had heard that Larsen had been mistreated very much by Gestapo-- torture. And I decided that we would try to avoid that in the future. And I did it by making a-- we had an extra apartment that was never used by anybody, but filled up every day with new material so that the Germans-- that the fellow that was arrested could tell the Germans after enough torture that this is where I get material. This is where I meet my people. And the Germans could go down and find the new material. And this way we would avoid to have any more of our people caught.

Would you tell us about the Swedish seamen who helped with the rescue operation?

Not only the Swedish seamen, but the Swedish government had a very precarious situation with the Germans. The Germans would actually present the Swedish ambassador in Copenhagen with facts of what they thought that they had sent over to us, something like if they ever found a weapon, that would be a Husqvarna that would be made in Sweden, the ambassador would be called up to the German head command and asked, are you people supplying in the underground in Denmark?

And also, the fact about oil and fuel for the boats. We had a hard time convincing the Swedes to begin with that, that what we needed. And they didn't want to be caught in the middle being criticized too much from the Germans. But thanks to some of our good people and good friends in Sweden, not the least Jewish good friends, many government agencies were convinced that they had to give us all the help that we needed. And that was not only in money, but there were some of the officers in the Danish-- no, in the Swedish Navy. And the Swedish custom officers were told to be helpful in everything they could.

One of our very good friends was a police commissioner, Richard Hansen. And in MalmÃ¶, we had some very good friends, like Oswald Ramby-- R-A-M-BY. And of course, we also had our good friend Julius Huttner, a Jewish man in Gothenburg, who gave the Jewish people lots of clothing and great help when they came in. This is just out of my memory now, but just a few names.

Thank you.

Can you tell us a little bit more specifically about some of the people that you helped?

I can show you here in my scrapbook that I have one card that in Danish says-- well, this is a translation. "I have been on MÃ¥nster II, and got good news. We like to say-- tell you our thank you." Ruest and Bo Muller-Nielsen.

There was another thank you note for Mr. Kalchar, who actually only was half-Jewish. And in my papers the other day, I found a list of names. And I was called up very, very close to the liberation day of the 5th of May and asked whether I would be willing to let the fishermen go out again and take some Estonians over to Sweden, some people that came from the various universities and did not want to go back to Germany and certainly not wanted to go back to Russia.

And I have a list of their names, and I'll be happy to give a photostatic copy of it to the Holocaust someday.

Thank you.

Going to read part of a letter now from the Swedish--

Side.

--side about the payment of the fishermen.

Yes, I have from the October 11, 1944, under transit, I have a letter that I translated. It's from Mr. Hendil, who is the leader of Danish-Swedish refugee organization in Sweden. And it is concerning the pay of the fishermen. First of all, I'll read it in translation.

"In both of the first [NON-ENGLISH]"-- in parenthesis. That means ships or boats coming over-- "--were three shipments on each boat, one large and two small." Again, in parentheses, "One large is a grown up person and two small are kids that [? A2 ?] himself had arranged. I hear that he charged 550 kroner in freight for the first shipment. This is too much when he meets us and receive 100 for us for the mail, and also motor oil that he received today. We normally pay a maximum of 500.

Today, we have two return [? colleague ?] shipments, plus mail. The two return [? colleague ?] again, are persons that came back to Denmark either as agents or couriers, so that he from this side received 300 kroners from us. If he has [? colleague ?] or people in return, he will receive more according to the schedule in letter of October 6.

I will try to make 500 a maximum, and not, as today, 500 plus 200, 700 kroner. The man who takes leadership shall be called Hans Christian Andersen. Give him our regards, and tell him that we hope for a fine cooperation. If he needs some small things from this side, ask him to let us know. Outstanding that there is co-work with 34, 86, and 0.

We have a list that we can go over together. It should be given over to Hans Christian Andersen. Everything considered, it is my opinion that first priority must be--" and the rest of it is missing.

Not that most of them--

Please give us your name that was used at the beginning of the war, please.

Yeah. At the beginning of the 1940, when I was a policeman, my full name was Knud Dyring hyphen Olsen-- O-L-S-E-N. Later on, when I was reported to the German General Hanneken of anti-German activities, I changed my name. I wanted to be in the same place in the phone book. So I chose the name Dyby-- D-Y-B-Y. B-Y in Danish means "rown," like Danby, Grimsby, or anything else. And I use that name legally, and I have kept it.

However, in the underground movement, the Danish-Swedish refugee organization called me Carlson. I was also known under the name of Knud O. Nielsen, and also on the name of Paul Petersen. Et cetera, et cetera.

Thank you, Mr. Dyby, for participating in the conference, Faith in Humankind-- Resources of Jews During the Holocaust."