

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

**Name of interviewee:** Dyby, Knud

**Date of interview:** 6/6/1991 & 1/5/1996

**Summary:** Both interviews cover Knud's experiences working in the underground, but the first interview gives a more general idea of the actions and attitudes of Denmark and the Danish people during the occupation, while the second interview goes into much more detail about Knud's specific operations. Knud also talks a little bit more about his family in the second interview.

Knud was born Knud Olsen in March, 1915 in Vorup, Denmark. He grew up on the Peninsula of Jutland in the city of Randers. His father owned a print shop and after his schooling, Knud became an apprentice in typography. Growing up, Knud's favorite hobby was sailing -- a skill that would serve him much later in life. When he turned 18, Knud appeared for compulsory military service and the military commission assigned him to serve the Danish King as a Guardsman. After completing his service, Knud joined Denmark's state police department, directly after the German invasion of the country on April 9, 1940.

While working as a state police officer, Knud also began work as a part of the underground resistance in Copenhagen, where he assisted the resistance movement by sabotaging the Germans and circulating information on the war via illegal newspapers.

In October of 1943, the Nazis ordered a round up of all the Danish Jews. According to Knud, the entire Jewish population in Copenhagen (some 7,500 people) immediately went into hiding. At that point, Knud became an activist on the Danish side in the Danish-Swedish Refugee Service, assisting Jews, stranded allied Airmen (British and American), and Baltic refugees. The Service assisted in transporting 1,888 people from German-occupied Denmark to safety in Sweden. Knud guided refugees to the harbor and managed fishing skippers, which crossed the sound between Denmark and Sweden carrying mail, money, weapons, intelligence information, news, and refugees. Individuals and small groups were able to smuggle out nearly all of Denmark's Jews within three months. Knud also collected information and intelligence on German military activity to give to Allied forces.

Knud changed his name and moved around Copenhagen many times to avoid arrest by the Germans. In September 1944, the Gestapo arrested about 1,800 Danish state police officers and sent them to concentration camps in Germany. Knud narrowly escaped arrest and was forced to go much deeper into the underground. That same day, Knud stole hundreds of identification forms from the police station so that he could make new licenses, birth certificates, ID cards, and other documents for the underground workers.

Knud came to the United States a couple of years after the end of the war and was helped to become a U.S. citizen by Congressman Emmanuel Celler of New

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York. He says he came to the United States, in part, to escape the feeling of imprisonment he had being in Denmark, and also because the economic situation in Denmark was poor at the time. Knud first ran a small import company in New York and then worked as a typographer for Fortune magazine and eventually became the foreman in a print shop. He married a Danish woman, moved to San Francisco and has one daughter, Suzanne. Photographs, identification papers, and notes of gratitude to Knud from the people he rescued are shown at the end of the first interview.