

# THE OJC

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DEVOTED TO AMERICAN AND JEWISH IDEALS

## Egypt's FM warns of Mideast nuclear arms race

page 2

## Local artists documents Cuban Jewish community

page 2

## Israeli police, protestors clash at Old City holy site

page 3

## Holocaust survivors reunite with US veterans

page 3

### ABOUT THE COVER

Local resident John Koenigsberg traveled recently to The Netherlands to honor the Snijsckers family who hid him from the Nazis. The house where he was hidden (top, second from 1.) looked down the hill where residents could clearly see German soldiers in bunkers with anti-aircraft guns.

### In The Chronicle

At The JCC .....	9
Bowling .....	11
Community .....	6-7
Dining Guide .....	12
Editor's Mailbox .....	5
Federation .....	8
Front Page .....	2
Lifecycle .....	11
Marketplace .....	4
New Generation .....	9
Synagogues .....	10
Viewpoint .....	5
World News .....	3



## RIGHTEOUS AMONG NATIONS *Preserving a single soul*

By Rosa Stolz

A five-and-a-half-year-old Dutch child, hidden from the Nazis by a Catholic family between 1943 and 1945, returned to The Netherlands as an adult for a special presentation from Israel's Yad Vashem, honoring the family that saved his life.

On Sept. 3, John Koenigsberg, a central Ohio resident for the past 37 years, and longtime member of Congregation Tifereth Israel, participated in the ceremony recognizing Johannes Hubertus Theodorus Snijsckers and his wife Anna Elisabeth Snijsckers, posthumously, as "Righteous Among the Nations." The ceremony included remarks by B. Wesly, consul to the Israeli Embassy and Chairman of the Dutch Jewish Community of Maastricht, and a personal tribute from John Koenigsberg. A specially struck Yad Vashem medal and an engraved plaque were presented by His Excellency Harry Kney-Tal, Ambassador of Israel, to Tonny Ritzen Snijsckers, who accepted the honor on behalf of her parents. Tonny is the sole surviving child of the Snijsckers.

Koenigsberg, who traveled with his wife Beverly, daughters Tami Mandel and Lisa Gill, and son Steven, first talked about his life as a young Jewish boy in Amsterdam during the Holocaust, when he told his story to Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. For the past 3 years, Koenigsberg has been engaged in the lengthy process of collecting and submitting comprehensive historical documentation required for the Snijsckers fam-

ily to be honored by Yad Vashem.

The Snijsckers families and their descendants join the "Righteous Among the Nations" family, coming from 44 countries, Christian and Muslim. Nearly 5,000 Dutch citizens played a role, at great personal risk, in protecting and saving the lives of Jewish citizens during the Second World War. As a last-

sonal danger befalling citizens harboring Jews in occupied Holland. Koenigsberg attended Catholic primary school while under the protection of the Snijsckers, and only the headmaster knew about Koenigsberg's real identity.

In September 1944, Limburg Province (southern Holland) was liberated and in May 1945, all of The

cial Organization.

Yad Vashem was established shortly after the State of Israel won its independence. Its chief mission is to commemorate the murder of 6 million innocent Jews in the Shoah. Yad Vashem collects testimonies from survivors in order to identify and honor those valiant human beings, who demonstrated resourcefulness and courage in confronting the Nazi murderous machine.

A person can be considered for the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" when the data on hand based on survivor testimony or other documentation, clearly demonstrates that a non-Jewish person risked his or her life, freedom, and safety, in order to rescue one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation without exacting monetary compensation or other rewards. This applies equally to rescuers who have since passed away. On the certificate given to Yad Vashem honorees are inscribed the words of the Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin (23 a-b), words setting up a high moral norm for humankind.

*For this reason was man created alone,*

*To teach that whosoever destroys a single soul,*

*It is as though he has destroyed an entire world,*

*And whosoever preserves a single soul,*

*It is as though he has preserved an entire world...*

*Rosa Stolz is a non-profit marketing and communications professional, and a member of Congregation Tifereth Israel.*



**Tonny Snijsckers and John Koenigsberg pause inside the Synagogue of Maastricht, where the ceremony was held.**

ing monument to their courage and humanity, the Snijsckers' names will be added to the Wall of Honor of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

In spring 1943, 5-year-old John Koenigsberg was brought to the home of Johannes (called Thei) and Anna (called Bertha) Snijsckers by members of the Dutch Resistance. John (called Johnny by the Snijsckers) was lovingly accepted by "Mama and Papa" Snijsckers as their fifth child, and was welcomed by the couple's children as their little brother. The family hid Koenigsberg despite the per-

Netherlands was set free. Koenigsberg's parents survived the war and they were reunited in 1945. His father Bernard had been active in the Dutch resistance and his mother, Sally, spent two years in hiding. In 1949, a second son, David, was born. In 1953, the Koenigsberg family immigrated to America.

John Koenigsberg has served as a Holocaust speaker and advisor, volunteering for Jewish Family Services and the Columbus Jewish Federation. He is co-chair of Hazak, Congregation Tifereth Israel's 55+ So-