

## **ERMELO FAMILIES RECEIVE HIGHEST ISRAELI AWARD**

Yad Vashem awarded in museum Het Pakhuis

ERMELO - Three families were posthumously awarded a Yad Vashem by the State of Israel this afternoon. This is because they were active in the resistance during the Second World War and allowed Jews to hide in their house. Thanks to them, the Jewish boy Aby Staal survived the Second World War. Daughter Lorri, who had come over from America especially for this, expressed her gratitude this afternoon.

At the beginning of the war, the Staal family went into hiding in a holiday home 'Brem en Den' on the Watervalweg with the Keijzer family. Grandson Frederik Keijzer told this afternoon in the Het Pakhuis museum how he played with the Staal children as a five-year-old. "We lived in Utrecht at the time and only went to Ermelo when the weather was bad. Otherwise there was a great risk that trains would be bombed." Due to betrayal, NSB mayor Klinkenberg managed to find the house 'Brem en Den', where Keijzer was unable to prevent the Staal family from being arrested. The eldest son Aby Staal was found under his bed, but managed to escape. He knocked on the door of Elsgeest printing house. He arranged for Aby to be taken to the Ermelo post office. "Main purchaser Arie van den Berg transported the boy to the Rook family in a covered cargo bike." Anton Rook was acting director of the Ermelo post office at the time.

New York

This afternoon, the Staal family was extensively deported to Sobibor via camp Westerbork. That's where they died. Aby stayed at the post office for two weeks after his flight. When the Germans were billeted in the post office to tap telephones, it became too dangerous for Aby and he moved to the Dekker-Aal family. He did not stay here long because a few days later he was able to go to a hiding place in Apeldoorn. After the war, Aby Staal decided to emigrate to America and settled in New York. Contact with Ermelo dwindled over the years. Contact started again in 2016 when the Keijzer family went looking for Staal in New York. This was the start of the search for applying for the award.

Eva and Bram

During a solemn meeting in museum Het Pakhuis, the descendants of the different families Keijzer and Rook from Ermelo and Van den Berg from Apeldoorn received the Israeli award from a representative of the Israeli Embassy. The descendants received a medal and a certificate stating the names Rook, Keijzer and Van den Berg. These names are carved into a wall in Jerusalem, in a park dedicated to the "Righteous Among the Nations." The presentation of this award took place in Het Pakhuis because of the link with the previous exhibition in the context of 75 years of Liberation about Eva and Bram Beem.

Honorary title

The Yad Vashem is the highest Israeli award for non-Jews who helped Jews at the risk of their lives during World War II. The honorific title Yad Vashem means: Righteous Among the Nations. Nearly 28,000 people around the world have been recognized as 'Righteous' by Yad Vashem. After Poland, the Netherlands is the country with the most awards. Nevertheless, the Netherlands also shows the highest mortality rate within the Jewish community in Western Europe. No more than twenty-six percent of Dutch Jews survived the Holocaust.