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Jack Koomen wears many different hats and capes in life. Not to mention his favourite Sunday wooden shoes.

The 72-year-old Southview Avenue resident belongs to three different fraternal organizations and is required to wear full regalia during club functions.

And Koomen wears his wooden shoes and traditional dress whenever he represents the local Dutch community at public events and dances.

"Needless to say, I spend a lot of money on dry cleaning for my hats, capes and native outfits," he joked, "because you want to look good when you're performing or attending special club functions."

Koomen said being involved with fraternal organizations is his way of making this world a better place to live.

He is extremely proud of recently becoming a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem during a special ceremony in Jerusalem in 2000.

"From my point of view, this is the highest honour I have because it's a papal organization based right in the Holy Land and supporting the Holy Places in the Holy Land," he said with a twinkle in his eyes.

With that organization, he gets to wear a white cape with red insignia — symbolizing crosses — and special pin obtained during the installation ceremony in Jerusalem.

Koomen is also an honorary life member of both the Knights of Columbus, Belleville Council, and the Order of Alhambra, Seneca Caravan 109.

He joined the Knights of Columbus in 1972 and has served as a former district deputy and Grand Knight. He's currently the treasurer of the Archbishop J.L. Wilhelm Council.

Earlier this summer, Koomen was honoured by being named the "Knight of the Year" for his outstanding service during the past year. (He earned the same award 25 years earlier, in 1978).

"That is quite an honour to be selected by the past Grand

Knights of the council," he said.

With the Knights, he wears a black cape and a black white-feathered chapeau.

Koomen is entering his second year as Grand Commander of the Order of the Alhambra. He has been with the local council since 1978 and proudly wears his white fez with tassel and rhinestone lettering.

He serves as a director with the Dutch Ethnic Society of Quinte and wears two different native outfits for public events and dances.

"You don't normally see wooden shoes coloured like this but these are my Sunday wooden shoes and I wanted them to look really dressy," he said.

Koomen belongs to St. Joseph's Catholic Church and is vice-president of a special committee that visits patients in nursing homes and hospitals, promoting rosary/prayer among patients.

And why does he belong to all these organizations?

"Because I believe in the betterment of church and community and fellow man as a whole," he answered without the slightest hesitation.

"I am doing my little part to make this a better society and I like to encourage everyone to do their part to make this world a better place to live."

Being a member of national fraternal organizations "allows me to reach the people in need," he said.

Koomen has also did his part donating blood. In 1997, the Canadian Red Cross Society honoured him for his 100th donation.

"I gave until 71 years old and I was at 110 donations then," he said. He can no longer donate blood because of his age.

"I thank the Lord for my good health and I like to share it with my fellow man," he said.

Born and raised in Holland, Koomen and his family emigrated to Canada in February of 1951. They settled near Sarnia and worked together on the Canadian sponsor family's farm.

Koomen married Lois, a Brighton resident, in 1956, and he went to work at a pickle factory there.

The couple eventually moved to Belleville in 1962 and he got a job with

Belleville Auto Electric. He spent 11 years as an electrical and fuel mechanic. After the firm folded, he worked in various jobs before joining Belleville General Hospital in 1978 as a maintenance mechanic.

He retired from the hospital in 1996.

Koomen and his wife — who died in 1990 — have six children.

Besides his many hours with fraternal organizations, Koomen plies the waterways of Quinte and the Islands aboard his 22-foot sailboat. He also finds time to spend with his children and grandchildren.

"Canada is a great place to live. I'm grateful to live here and enjoy everything it has to offer," he said.