

FROM TWIN BUTTE TO 149 SQUADRON TO ILE d'YEU

-An Australian author has chronicled the story of John Ekelund, an RCAF 149 Sqn Stirling pilot from the southwestern corner of Alberta. Ekelund and his crew of four RNZAF and two RAF airmen were killed while on a gardening (mine-laying) operation and are buried together on a tranquil island off the coast of France.



Located just nine kilometres from the front range of the Canadian Rockies near Waterton Lakes National Park, the Twin Butte General Store is one of only a few buildings in Twin Butte, located in classic Alberta ranching country.



Located sixteen kilometres off the west coast of France, Ile d'Yeu is a small, beautiful and peaceful island. Our museum's Australian friend was surprised to come across the grave of John Ekelund and his crew.

The Ekelund Story

Greg Lockhart

Introduction

One day in the European summer of 2012, I visited the French-Atlantic-island Île d'Yeu, about eleven nautical miles off Fromentine on the Bay of Biscay. Set on the island and radiating from it, the narrative, which I wrote on my return to Australia that year, distilled the day into a travel story and memoir. Into this narrative, an account of my discovery in the Île d'Yeu Communal Cemetery of the collective tomb of a seven-man RAF Commonwealth Bomber Command aircrew is woven. Their Stirling bomber had crashed on the island in 1942.

Drawn into the story of the fallen flyers, I set about trying to reconstruct it. And remarkably, 70 years after the crash, it was still possible to recover something of the story's human as well as its operational dimensions. I was indeed able to contact the family of one of the crew: that of the pilot, Royal Canadian Air Force Warrant Officer II John Herbert Ekelund, 'Jack' to his friends, a farmer from Twin Butte, Alberta.

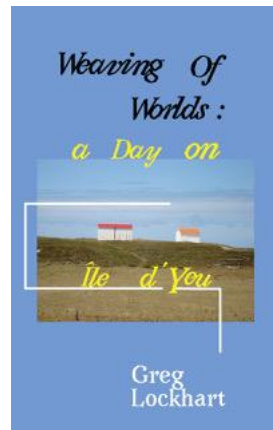
In this photo, probably taken in 1941 not long after Jack had completed his flying training and not long before he went to war, he is a 22-year-old Sergeant, showing with shy pride his new pilot's wing. He is standing with Grand Ma and Grand Pa Alison (on his mother's side) in Edmonton, Alberta.



That photo is a reminder that, whatever else war is, it is a family story. It is also an indication that, on receiving a call from me in Sydney in late 2012, the family was deeply moved. In 1942-43, Canadian authorities had informed it that Jack was missing in action and, later, missing presumed dead. Yet the family told me it was not until my call 70 years later that

they knew his fate. Until then they had no idea he had fallen and been buried on Ile d'Yeu. In return, they provided me with precious family information, including that photo.

For various reasons, I put the draft of my story aside for a decade and, finally, in 2023, published it with Reading Sideways Press in Leiden, the Netherlands, as *Weaving of Worlds: a Day on Île d'Yeu*.



On reading the book in her eighties, Jack's cousin Muriel Eklund (different branches of the family have adopted different spellings of the name), who was three weeks old when he disappeared, and who helped me in 2012, wrote to me saying *I shed tears reading about Jack*. She also suggested I mention my story to the Canadian Bomber Command Museum in Nanton, Alberta. On recently contacting the BCM historian, he invited me to write this piece, saying: *we are very interested in the Ekelund story*.

Backstory

Before visiting the island, I had been travelling with my wife Monique in France on family business. A former Australian army officer and veteran of the Vietnam War, I was also an historian of it, who had travelled often to France to research its early French Indochina period (1945-54). On this family trip, we were staying in the village of Le Temple de Bretagne near Nantes with old friends, Dominique Turbé and his wife also named Dominique Turbé.

At some point, Dominique-*he* gifted me a book, which had belonged to his late father Claude (1932-84). The book was *Pilot de guerre* (1944) — translated into English as *Flight to Arras* (1944) — a memoir by the famous free French aviator and author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Claude had been a boy, eight-to-twelve-years-old on the island during the German occupation (1940-44). Later in the early 1950s, he read the book as a young man seeking guidance for life. I realized this when reading, with closer attention than most passages in the book, the ones he had marked and underlined in pencil as he read it.

I mention the book and my reading of Claude's reading of it for two reasons: it touches the knot of family relations that got me to the island in the first place; and second, on finding the tomb of the fallen aircrew, it was difficult for me not to think about the key themes in Saint-Exupéry's *Pilot de guerre*.

On the first point, a day or so after Dominique gave me the book and we had discussed it, he asked me what we wanted to do on an upcoming spare day. I suggested a trip to Île d'Yeu. It

was nearby, only an hour or so by road from Nantes to Fromentine, and a further 30 minutes from there by ferry to the island. It was also the kind of place to where my book suggests some *magic of islands* was relating me, some (Australian) *childhood dream* of stirring tales set in wonderful, inaccessible locations. The important thing in immediate context, though, was the family connection: Île d'Yeu was home of the ancient Breton fishing community, where Dominique was born — as Claude had been before him.

Discussing Claude's copy of *Pilot de guerre* is also likely to have reminded me that with allied victory in 1945, Île d'Yeu was the place to where Marshal Pétain, the former leader of Vichy France, had been banished in the same year. He died there in 1951, and some prospect of seeing the site of his exile had probably occurred to me.

Such a thought, in any case, would connect with the second point: Saint-Exupéry built his memoir around a mission he flew to Arras during the battle for France in 1940. Written after France lost that battle in June, his memoir recounted the action, but was also preoccupied with the life-giving issues that interested Claude, following his Île d'Yeu childhood under German occupation. Generally, Claude's underlining had marked the matters in *Pilot de guerre* about what would constitute the *victory to come* in the *war for civilisation* against the bitter emptiness of Vichy France's collaboration with Nazi Germany.

Saint-Exupéry did not live to see such a victory himself; he fell on 31 July 1944, almost a month before the liberation of France. Yet Claude saw the liberation. And in retrospect, it seems certain to me that Saint Exupéry's themes, which are epic, not only hovered over Claude's life, but over the last flight of the Bomber Command aircrew — and its tomb. Saint-Exupéry had no illusions about the dark heat of combat. At the same time, his book's message of love and sacrifice as an antidote to death and communal disintegration recurs as an overarching theme of *Weaving of Worlds* into which *the Ekelund story* is woven.

The day

The moment Dominique agreed we should go to Île d'Yeu, I knew a story awaited me there. And there it was. Not that, of course, I had much prior idea of what it would be.

On stepping off the ferry at Port Joinville that misty morning, I had not in fact anticipated the fresh new setting that was, for whatever reason, not entirely unexpected either.



As we toured the island, it was similarly a case of the island's ambience making me feel at home, even as it seemed entirely new: the pared back beauty of its wind-swept landscape; the limitless expanse of sky and sea, which is not only the measure of the island's miniature

landmass — nine-and-a-half-kilometers long and four at its widest point — but of its truly global view.

Neither had I imagined Île d'Yeu history as a fragment of continental culture that would be fascinating in its faint familiarity. The Church at St Sauver has been the center of a single parish for over a thousand years. For centuries the island's tuna fleets ventured each summer deep into the south Atlantic, while women worked the fields. Some sheep, a few vineyards, and now vanished conifer forests suggest a way of life, transformed in the last century by tourism. Today the population is 4,700 people.

Nor, until I got to the island, had I begun to imagine its military history, its implication in a myriad of maritime raids, invasions, and continental wars.



The west coast ruins of the *Old Château* built in 1342 at the beginning of The Hundred Years War would capture my attention. As did abundant evidence of invasions, both ancient and modern — Viking, Saracen, Spanish, British, and German. Near the ruins of what tourist brochures call *the machine gun post*, for instance, Dominique told me about the German occupation of 1940-44: *J'ai toujours entendu mon père dire qu'il avait eu faim*, I always heard my father saying he had been hungry.

The story really was there, even though initially I had little idea of how my intuition of it would be vindicated; and indeed, no idea at all that we would find the tomb of the Bomber Command aircrew, which a hungry ten-year-old Claude must have known crashed on the island, even if he had not seen it falling.

Finding the collective grave

We reached the cemetery in the afternoon after circumnavigating the island. Dominique's



family graves, those of his father Claude and of his sister Sophie were our first port of call.

Next stop, Pétain's tomb, which was ahead of even the Old Château as the island's number one tourist attraction. And as much as it boosted the local economy, we found it had been damaged and despoiled earlier in the day. We will pass over details of the desecration here; you may pursue them in my book if you wish. Suffice to say that the desecration reminds us of the deep fissures in the French past that resulted in Pétain's exile on *Ile d'Yeu*.

The condition of exile had even been extended to his remains, a condition that the position of his tomb signifies in the cemetery itself. My book records that *Pétain's tomb is out of alignment with all the others in the cemetery. His tomb faces east; all the others face west, directly out to sea.*

It was, then, against that steel-like statement of exile within the island of exile, that the local community acceptance of the foreign tomb, around which we next gathered, struck me forcefully.

The others had gone ahead and had stopped at a grave in the last row beside the cemetery's southern wall. On approaching it myself, it seemed distinctive, as did six or so others behind it in the same row. Their design was plainer, less ornate than the others. Then, knowing the severe simplicity of British Commonwealth War Graves Commission style when I see it — my former military career came in here — it became clear that, indeed, they were CWGC graves. Furthermore, the stark contrast between the reverse orientation of Pétain's tomb and the inclusion of the foreign ones in exact alignment with the local array impressed me. It made me feel momentarily at home.

At the first grave, which was a collective one, this was what I found.

The words incised into the common headstone read: *These Seven Airmen Fell and were Buried Together*. The individual headstones are set unusually like paving stones onto the surface of the grave, on which, it seemed touching to observe, someone who cared about it had passed by very recently. Flimsy palm leaf crosses had been placed on each headstone; each cross held down with a small stone. The inscriptions on each headstone revealed the composition of the crew, all of whom died on 16 October 1942, when, as it later became clear to me, their aircraft fell on Île d'Yeu.



*R/77565 Warrant Officer II
J.H. EKELUND
Pilot
Royal Canadian Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 23*

*NZ404353 Flying Officer
M.S. GILBERD
Observer
Royal New Zealand Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 28*

*NZ402823 Flight Sergeant
E.H. HOWELL
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Royal New Zealand Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 21*

*1184443 Sergeant
J.C. LEACH
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Royal Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 22*

*NZ405737 Sergeant
A. MARTIN
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Royal New Zealand Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 27*

*NZ404970 Sergeant
M.A. TORRANCE
Air Gunner
Royal New Zealand Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 30*

*522477 Sergeant
E.H. UZZELL
Flight Engineer
Royal Air Force
16 October 1942 Age 25*

A crew of seven meant Bomber Command. Bomber Command was not beyond my ken. Some 4,050 members of Australian aircrew out of 13,000, who flew in it during World War Two had been killed. And this had much to do with what initially drew me into the story of Ekelund and his crew: the inscriptions on its gravestones told a story that was instantly intelligible to me.

Weaving of Worlds points out that the New Zealanders were Anzacs, upholders of the joint Australian and New Zealand Army Corps tradition that was established in World War One and is influential in both countries to this day. Some 1,850 New Zealanders had been killed out of 6,000 who flew in Bomber Command. Established connections with Canadian and British airmen existed. Almost all airmen from the Dominions who fought over Europe began their odysseys with training in their home countries. A large percentage undertook further training in Canada under EATS, the Empire Air Training Scheme. There were smaller schemes in Africa for South Africans and Rhodesians. Advanced and operational training followed in England. I could also have said that some 10,000 Canadian and some 40,000 British airmen fell.

Something I didn't know until later was that Ekelund and his men were from 149 Squadron, which flew Sterling Bombers from Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Global reconstruction

On returning to Australia, standard books allowed me to fill out quickly my understanding of strategic bombing in World War Two and the background to the Bomber Command missions that led to the crash of Jack's Stirling on Île d'Yeu.

Enabling me to weave that dramatic event into my story was, then, a pivotal link with Royal New Zealand Air Force historian Errol Martyn in Christchurch, New Zealand. His trilogy *For Your Tomorrow* (1998-2008) and other material he provided first enabled me to link the names listed on the collective grave with the fact they had been members of 149 Squadron RAF based at Lakenheath in Suffolk. This squadron was, as Martyn's work also allowed me to describe *involved with two others in 3 Group Bomber Command in mine laying operations around the Biscay ports on the evening of 16th October 1942.*

Thirty-four Wellington and Stirling bombers had taken off just after 1800 hours. Four did not return. One of these was hit by flak and crashed at Grandchamps-des-Fontaines, 17km from the centre of Nantes – remarkably close to where we are staying with the Dominiques at Le Temple de Bretagne. At least two of the other missing aircraft were also probably hit by flak

around Nantes or St Nazaire (with its German submarine pens). One of those others crashed in the Bay of Biscay off Île de Ré not far from Île d'Yeu. The other was the Stirling from 149 Squadron captained by Canadian pilot John Herbert Ekelund, which took off at 1830 hours to lay mines in the Gironde estuary at Bordeaux and, within about two and a half hours, had crashed on Île d'Yeu.

This scenario, including the crash on Île d'Yeu, was generally supported in real time by original Bomber Command documents for the night of 16 October 1942, held by the BCM. Therein, *149 Squadron Operation Record Book* and *Bomber Command Night Raid Reports* both for that night add a few details which are new to me. *Record Book* ascribes to Jack's Stirling a number, I "D" B.F. 392, and makes it clear that it flew with the same crew on at least its last three missions. *Reports* state that *Operation Gardening*, the droll, or was it macabre official name for the mission, successfully laid 16 mines in the Gironde Estuary. Whether B.F. 392 contributed to that tally is something we don't know. In *Record Book*, we simply see the ominous clerical notations: two Wellingtons and two Stirlings *failed to return*. Meanwhile, giving readers something to go on, the records can only suggest tentatively what might have happened to the missing aircraft. *Reports* say, for example, that *there are observations of aircraft shot down by light flak in the Nantes area and over the Île d'Yeu, which may account for the Stirlings*.

Different from the original documents, my summation began with the certainty that their Stirling *had crashed on Île d'Yeu*. There, indeed, I had been at the tomb. But still, I needed to know how that had happened.

Undoubtedly, the movies provided me with the imaginative context for what history might recall: search lights shafting a flacked night sky; bomber squadrons groaning on through the eerie glow; a few of their number are hit and cartwheeling like black crosses out of formation, falling. It was, however, when my research began to yield precise facts, which seemed to defy time and place, that it began to get me closer in some real evocation of the past to Jack and his crew.

In a New Zealand newspaper, I first came face to face with the image of one of them. The caption presented in a matter-of-fact New Zealand way the image of *Flight-Sergeant E.H. Howell, of Wellington missing on operations*.



Other information came in, like wreckage, in no order. Then, in November 2012, in Sydney, my great good fortune was to be presented with the proverbial needle in a haystack. Seventy years and one month after the crash, first hand news of it suddenly and, it seemed,

miraculously provided me with factual clarification from the island via intermediaries across the world.

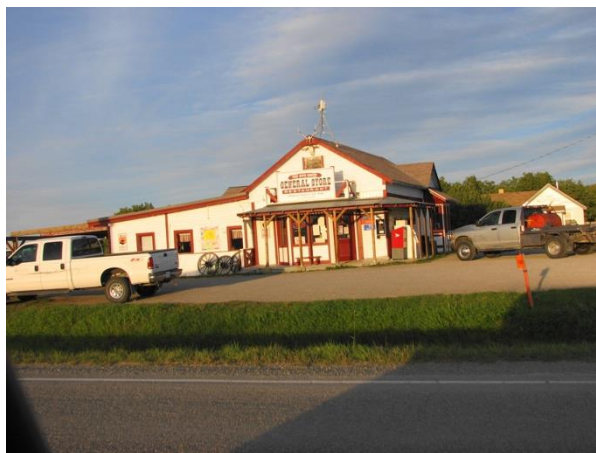
Such is the weaving of worlds that Errol Martyn, from Christchurch, sent me from the New Zealand National Archives in Wellington, a copy of the service record of Flying Officer Morris Gilbert. A letter on his record is dated 11 February 1947 and addressed to his father in Wellington. The letter contains an English translation of a statement made by a Monsieur G.A. Champsure to New Zealand officials in Paris.

The statement, which contained nothing less than an eye-witness account of Jack's aircraft coming in to crash on the island is quoted in full in my book. The first two sentences are enough to clarify the point: one evening *in October 1942, shortly after 9 p.m., a bomber appeared over the island of Île d'Yeu coming from the direction of St. Nazaire. The motors were missing badly, and the plane seemed to be in great difficulty. Just before reaching the southern shore, the plane burst into flames, and came down on the extreme south-western point of the little port at La Meule.* Next day, the Germans inspected the wreckage and buried the crew in a communal grave — where the crew's remains lay until they were reinterred in their current CWGC grave around early 1947.

Five years after the crash, Gilbert's family and, presumably, the families of the other three New Zealanders in the crew knew the circumstances of their irreparable losses. What information about the crash, if any, the families of the British crewmen received is unknown to me. In Canada, where Champsure's 1947 statement does not appear to have become officially known, we have seen that the Ekelund/Eklund family was never officially informed of Jack's precise fate.

Love and sacrifice

Precise facts kept coming, which permitted me to offset the official record with the family's perspective. A Royal Canadian Air Force historian helped me to access on-line Jack's service record in the Canadian National Archives, which revealed that he was from Twin Butte, Alberta. Here is a recent shot of the *General Store Restaurant*, which is the focal point for the tiny farming community.



In the Canadian White Pages for 2012, the name *Ekelund* appeared some 20 times or more in the whole country, only four times in Alberta. On calling the second number from Sydney, I was talking with the family.

Jack's cousin, Muriel, who we met earlier, was then in her seventies. She set out for me the family tree. Jack's parents Aaron and Ruth had five children: Jack, Jean, Bob, Bill, and Helen. Muriel also put me quickly in touch with the only survivors, Jack's youngest sister Helen, then 72, and his younger brother Bob, then 80. But here they are in 2011, with some cousins, the year before we were talking. There's no doubt who Bob is. Sister Helen is on his right, as you look at the photo. Cousin Muriel is standing directly behind him. The other two ladies are sisters, Jackie, and Sally — and cousins. Apart from the siblings, in fact, they are all cousins!



We also have earlier photos of Jack's two other siblings, who were already deceased in 2011: Jean (with Helen standing) in the summer of 1999 and Bill (with Muriel) around 2002.



In any case, my book relates how, deeply touched, the survivors told me about Jack, his school days, his desire to go to war to fight for his country, and his training flights. During these, Bob told me he once crash landed on water; his *Service Record* corroborates the intrepid exploit without mentioning any water: *Port engine failed — failure of a fuel line fitting — Pilot made successful forced landing*. Bob also mentioned that he flew bombing missions over Cologne in Germany. Helen told me how she had rarely been able to talk about her big brother as she grew up. His loss was so painful for their parents that they never recovered from and could never really talk about it.

Jack's *Service Record* shows that, on 30 October 1942, his father and mother were sent a *Ministerial Card*, presumably of official advice that Jack was *missing* and condolences. On 7 July 1943, the *Official Canadian Casualty Notification* addressed to his father Mr A.E.

Ekelund, Twin Butte, Alberta, contained the following *Casualty Details: Previously reported 'missing' 16-Oct-1942 after air operations (overseas), now 'presumed dead' for official purposes.*

On 4 November 1943, a *Memorial Cross* was sent to his mother. On 6 November 1943, a *Royal Message* was sent to both parents.

But still, with no definite confirmation of his death, parental hope that he might return maintained the grief. When Muriel recently wrote to me about Jack's parents, her Uncle Aron, and Aunt Ruth, she remembered: *Ruth was a well-respected schoolteacher in the area and Aron was a carpenter, a gentle soul. Thinking of how they must have suffered in silence, never knowing for sure where or if Jack was alive and may someday appear.* Muriel indicated that, nonetheless, it was impossible for some in other branches of the family — the cousins — not to say something: *I was 3 weeks old when he died, but for years I heard about him.*

My first 2012 call, which fixed for the first time Jack's fate for the family, finally broke that long brooding silence and perplexity. One other time, I remember being on the phone from Australia to Canada with one young member of the family talking him through the Île d'Yeu Communal Cemetery to Jack's tomb on Google Earth. My calls also first prompted Muriel and Helen to visit Canada's Bomber Command Memorial Wall at the BCM in Nanton. That major memorial, which had been built in 2005, was only an hour or so by road from where they lived. Yet, my calls were the prompt for their first visit to see Jack's name *J.H.Ekelund* inscribed on the wall amidst the 10,855 others — 10,400 were Canadians, the 455 others were mainly Americans, who entered the Second World War in Canadian uniform before the United States of America did.

Again in 2012, at a time of relief from the embedded family grief, it seemed miraculous to me when another special moment of illumination revealed the global reach of the story. Helen had spoken more with me than Bob had. But one day, Bob sent me two photos out of the blue; he had treasured and not lightly released them. One was the first photo shown above of Jack in 1941 standing in uniform with his grandparents in Edmonton. The other one was not just a selfie either.

My book explains: *This is an image of the whole crew, probably taken at Lakenheath, Suffolk. It was sometime after July 1942, when all four New Zealanders joined 149 Squadron, and before their last October evening. The airmen are lined up under the wing of their Stirling bomber from left to right: Gilbert, Howell, Torrance, Martin, Ekelund, Uzzell, and Leach.*



This epic image provokes my commentary in *Weaving of Worlds*; the one that refers to the above-mentioned Saint-Exupéry memoir.

They are obviously dressed to kill. And, indeed, their combat clobber loops back in my mind to Saint-Exupéry's account in Pilote de guerre of the warrior ritual of laborious dressing.

He recounts how he rigged himself out for his surveillance mission to Arras in three thick layers of clothing, heavy boots and in harnesses and assorted accessories that, like umbilical cords, brought the airmen into the being of the aircraft and vice-versa. He lists breathing masks, oxygen tubes, heating circuits and speaking tubes to support life and communications between the crew in their alien airborne environment – think especially of the air gunners in their exposed bubbles. Saint-Exupéry is ambivalent about this ritual. He indicates that, as a warrior prepares for combat, deliberate heavy dressing functions to keep his attention on immediate details. Rather than think about saving the world from Nazism or, more vitally, about their own daunting prospects, they are preoccupied with the minutiae of slow dressing. He is most concerned about his gloves, where are his damned gloves? Yet he cannot entirely suppress the thought that this ceremony is readying him for the executioner.

Ekelund and his crew were no different. They were also experienced airmen. Ekelund and at least three of the New Zealanders had flown well over 20 operations – Torrance 26. Like Saint-Exupéry, they knew the odds were stacked against them. Hence, the saddening, melancholy detail in the photo is, I think, the final immediate detail of their dressing for the camera: the near-smile or expression of fatalism in each case.

As the grand themes of love and death are woven into my story, a second eye-witness account of the aircraft's last moments can no longer be excluded from it. In 2013, news reached me in Sydney from Île d'Yeu that one Madame Besseau, then in her eighties, had heard of my interest in the fallen aircrew. And she told them what they passed on across the world to me: that night in 1942, as a young girl of ten or twelve, *she saw with her own eyes Jack's aircraft in flames as*

it came in over the island to crash. A day or so later, she went to the crash site, selected a piece of metal from the wreckage, and made it into a wring.

Today

In 2019, Bob and Helen passed away within a few months of each other. I'm still in touch with Muriel, who is from Pincher Creek, not far from Twin Butte, but lives in Claresholm half an hour from BCM in Nanton. It humbles me to hear from her that she is *grateful* for my book: *I do my best to keep my young family members updated as to what really happened during the war times — your story makes it very real for them.*

On Île d'Yeu, Madame Bessau, who saw the Stirling's flaming descent before she went to its crash-site in 1942, is now in her nineties. Such are the by-ways of history that she has been amazed — as I have been — to learn of her part in a truly global story. Not only has her part assumed unexpected significance for her in my book. It also came up on the air during a 2023 Australian Broadcasting Commission radio interview about the book, during which I was asked to talk about *the pilots*. Neither could it have occurred to her that what she saw and did all those years before is now a part of *the Ekelund story* in Canada.

In November 2023, it was very good to meet Errol Martyn, while visiting Christchurch, New Zealand. We swapped books. I gave him *Weaving of Worlds*, he gave me his comprehensively detailed Volume Three, Biographies and Appendices, *For Your Tomorrow* (2008). Before driving me to the airport, both he and a friend, who was a former pilot and now an archivist for a local aero club, took me to a café to have coffee.

In February 2024, Dominique and Dominique came from Nantes and Île d'Yeu to visit Monique and me in Sydney. It was a memorable ten days. Having presented me with his father's copy of *Pilot de guerre* twelve years before, he now presented us with a painting by his mother, now also in her nineties. She had done two paintings of the harbour at Port Joinville, one of which is in the Dominiques' house on Île d'Yeu, the other now in our house in Sydney. One sparkling blue summer day, we might have been in a parallel universe, if not on the island, as we did the walk along the coast path linking Sydney's eastern beaches.

And now, while *the Ekelund story* has a new generation, a senior member of the family, who Muriel recently told about my book, has come into the correspondence: none other than Jack's namesake Jack Cuppen.



Jack, now 72, lives in Calgary, and he explained to me in a March 2024 email, that he is the oldest son of Jean, *the second born after Uncle Jack*. Jean was *roughly thirteen years old when Jack went to war never to be seen again*.

Again, that fateful disappearance emerges to organise and partially suppress the family story. Neither has the family's story itself helped greatly to alleviate that suppression. Jack says: *we were scattered all over North America trying to make a living and raise our families so opportunities for reunions were rare*. But still, he has also told me that he was a pilot of a light aircraft in the 1980s and that *I was the firstborn grandchild in that generation and named after my uncle in his honour*.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the late Bob and late Helen Ekelund, Muriel Eklund, and Jack Cuppen, who have assisted me with the family information and photos that have helped to enable this essay. Muriel and Jack have also read an earlier version of this draft. Thanks also to Bomber Command Museum, Nanton, for assistance in accessing the original Bomber Command documents and the *Service Record* of John Herbert Ekelund (1919-1942). The Museum's historian has also assisted me on various technical matters and provided me with the photo of the General Store Restaurant at Twin Butte. The photos of Île d'Yeu are my own.