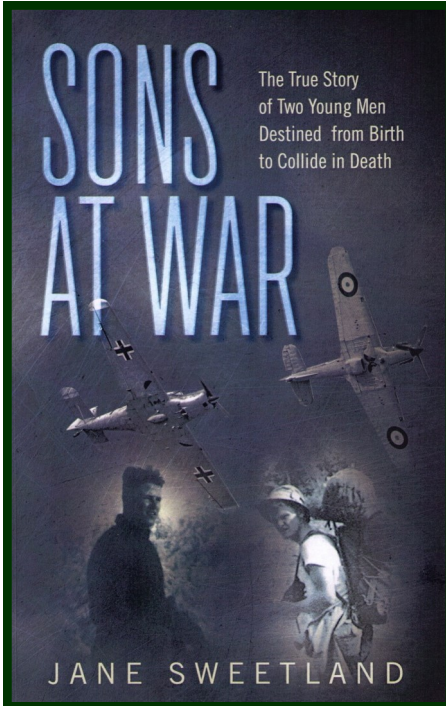




# Sweetland/Swetland Lore #82 Summer 2017

SWEETLAND/SWETLAND FAMILY ASSOCIATION



## The Question, the Journey, the Book

By Jane Sweetland

I didn't set out to write the book that became *Sons at War*; I set out to do some research about an uncle I never knew. Theodore Reilly Sweetland died in WWII, and my dad (Eugene David Sweetland) could never talk about him without getting choked up, so I didn't know much about Uncle Ted, but I did know one thing for sure; Ted was a hero, shot down over North Africa. I also knew that he did not go down alone. I knew that he had shot down the pilot who shot him.

I didn't know how my dad knew that and I didn't know, really, if the story was true. I certainly didn't know the name of the German pilot, but in this day of ubiquitous information, it was easy to find. His name was Joachim Muencheberg and it is true that these two young men sparred in the air over Tunisia; one in a British Spitfire, the other in a Messerschmitt; neither survived.

So, I learned that the family story was true and perhaps that should have been the end of it, except it was just a beginning for me. They had died as warriors, but they had not been born warriors, they were born into a family; they were someone's son. Who was Joachim? What had he been taught to believe? I could know a lot about Ted, whose mother was my grandmother. I knew the schools he attended; I had his war diary, the letters he wrote home, photos he took, newspaper columns he wrote for his college paper, and a journal he kept when he toured Europe in 1938.

About Joachim, I knew only his military record and I wanted to know more, though I didn't hold out much hope. My uncle had six siblings, but all had passed. Joachim had only one sister who would have been a young woman when the Russians marched through West Prussia on their way to victory in Berlin in 1945. It was not likely that she survived, but there was a chance, so I visited the family research archives in Salt Lake City, where I found land records, some family names, but not much more. Still I had names so I hired a researcher in Germany.

Four months later, I flew first to the former West Prussia (now Poland) where I walked the land where Joachim lived; then I took the train across Germany where I spent many hours with Joachim's nephews who shared family stories and Joachim's personal photo album. Like me, they had never known their uncle though Joachim had held Konrad, the eldest, in his arms. Joachim was Konrad's godfather.

*Sons at War* became Ted and Joachim's stories woven together against the backdrop of the history through which they lived and died. Ted Sweetland was the son of an American inventor. Joachim Muencheberg was the son of a German gentleman farmer. Both boys were 14-years-old when Adolf Hitler and Franklin Roosevelt came to power. For years, their lives loosely tracked one another's through school and church and neigh-



borhood games, mirror images of boyhoods spent six thousand miles apart. When they grew, both young men became fighter pilots, swearing allegiance to their respective nations. Ted and Joachim didn't know each other. They never knew each other's name, and didn't meet until they collided thousands of feet in the air one spring day, their last on earth.

Ted was Joachim's 135th kill.

Joachim was Ted's first.

Sons at War is their story, a true account of two lives, two deaths, and two nations at war.



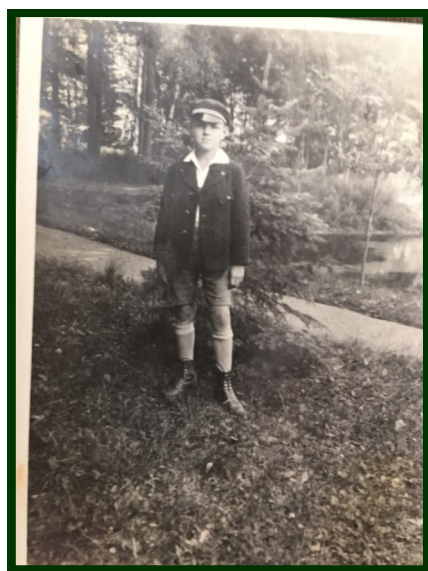
Jane Sweetland



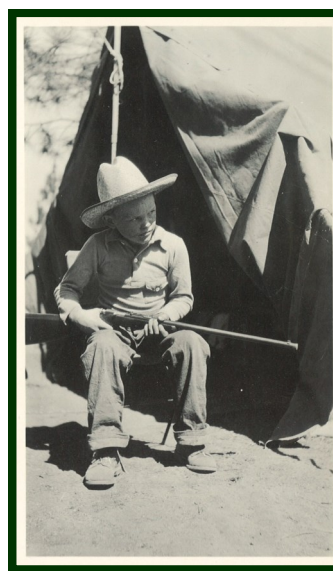
Erika Muencheberg and Joachim



Nell Sweetland and Ted



Joachim about 1929



Ted about 1929



## Family Relics Tell Stories

By Anne Kirby

Do you have some family relics? Now may be a good time, while you are alert and able, to label them for your posterity. They may be identified in various ways, such as with a tag, a note on the back of artwork, or photographed and listed with captions about their original owners-- and stories! Whatever you want your relatives to know about them. Some load their lists on a thumb drive which they keep in a safe deposit box, with a copy with the relics. Otherwise, some future generations may unknowingly just throw family relics away.

I grew up gazing at several paintings by my grandfather, Ernest John Sweetland. One in particular caught my imagination: a log cabin in the redwoods. Much later I learned that sometime after my Uncle Theodore Reilly Sweetland (1919-1943) was killed in WWII, my grandfather traveled from Piedmont, California to the redwoods near Ft. Bragg, California to seek solace in nature. My father was on a timber cruising assignment with other workers for a lumber company in the redwoods and they all stayed in a remote old cabin. Ernest included his name and the date of 1943 on the painting.



E.J. Sweetland Painting of a Cabin in the Redwoods, 1943

As I read Jane Sweetland's book, (See front page story) I thought of the grief and memories that would have been shared by my father and grandfather among the towering trees and of Ernest sitting outside painting and pondering while the men were at work during the daytime.



I have the anvil that I watched my father William E. Sweetland use in his workshop after learning to use the old anvil in his father's machine shop where Ernest made tools and parts for his inventions. Behind the heavy anvil hang two more of his paintings. In addition to the paintings, I inherited the mortar and pestle and graduated cylinder from his

Left: Ernest's Anvil, Paintings; Right: Lab items



lab.

My husband Dale is a keeper in more ways than one. His office is full of interesting antiques, among them a sturdy handmade beet topping knife from the late 1880's used in Utah beet fields by three generations of Kirbys, including Dale. The hook fastened to the end with rivets appears to be hand-hammered on an anvil. Dale would swing the hook into the large white sugar beets, pull them up and then cut off the beet tops with the sharp blade before they were sent to the sugar refinery.



When my brother Terry visited me recently, I suggested that he may want to see the contents of Mom's little old trunk. We enjoyed taking the objects out one by one and seeing the accumulation of nearly 100 years of memories. Our mother, Virginia Robinson Sweetland (1916-2016) had thoughtfully labeled many of them for us and even included several stories. Without labels, we would not have known which of Mother's relatives had originally owned the items, and in some cases, we couldn't have guessed why she saved them. Carefully packed in tissue, we found eight auburn ringlets along with the neatly penned story of her first haircut. One unlabeled treasure is a unique handmade brass lock and key such as we'd never seen before, possibly from about 1850. It probably has a story to tell!



Left: An unusual lock and key.  
Are any readers familiar with these?  
Please contact Anne Kirby.

**Do you have interesting Sweetland/ Swetland family information to share and be included in the next Lore such as an interesting story, a photo of an ancestor's home, people, a family heirloom, tools, etc., or comments on a previous story? Please send these to our editor, Anne Kirby (see contact information at right).**

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