



John was born November 20, 1913 in Wabasca, Alberta. His father was the half-native (Metis) Phillippe Decoine and his mother a full-blooded native Agnes Richard. John is the eldest child in a large Roman Catholic family, he had four brothers and three sisters. When he was 14 he left Public school after achieving Grade 3. He spoke English and Cree. After he left school, he worked until he enlisted, always as a farmhand. Besides that he tried to make a living as a trapper. In his spare time John enjoyed the great outdoors by swimming, fishing or hunting.

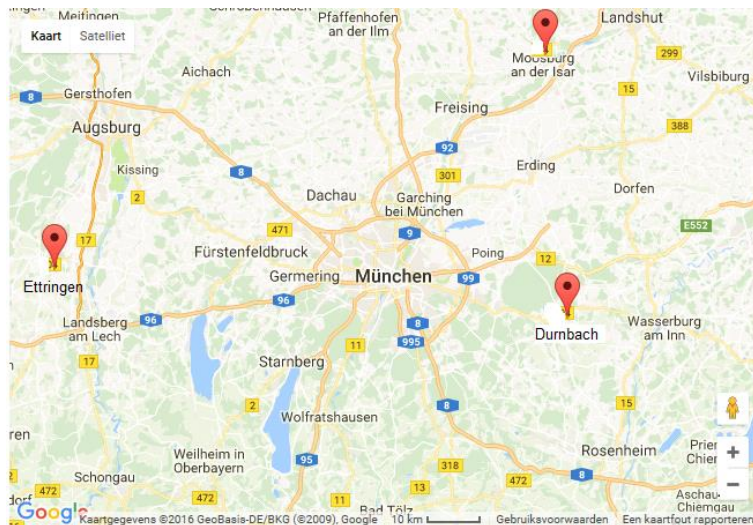
John married Adeline Gladu on July 11, 1932 in Desmarais, Alberta and a year later (July 25) their son Bernard James was born. Unfortunately the marriage didn't last because in 1936 John left his wife and son and they lived separate lives ever since.

When John enlisted in the army in January 1942 in Edmonton, he worked at the mixed farm of Jack Meyers in Berwyn, Alberta. When asked he gave the main reason for enlisting: desire for adventure.

After enlisting John starts his military training in among other places Calgary, Alberta. From there on July 5, 1942 he is shipped to the United Kingdom to finish his training over there. John and his unit

embark on October 27, 1943 to join the hostilities in the Mediterranean.

From April 1944 he was active on the Allied in Italy. December 27, 1944 John Decoine is mentioned as Missing in Action. Later it becomes clear he is made prisoner by the Germans and transported to Stalag 7A in Moosburg a.d. Isar in Bavaria (G.).



Map showing the locations in Bavaria mentioned in the text: Moosburg (German POW camp), Ettringen (stage of the tragedy) and Durnbach (British War Cemetery)

This camp was liberated April 29, 1945 by the American army and the freed prisoners of war were transported to several different locations. John ended up in a temporary encampment near Ettringen, Bavaria (G.), where a large number of ex-POWs were gathered together.

Presumably John came in contact with members of a Russian labour unit who offered him some self-distilled beverages. This drink contained methanol (a poisonous substance), and had fatal consequences for John. He died May first due to methanol poisoning.

In a medical rapport in his file it is recorded that on that day or the next, again in Ettringen, Joseph W. Brydon, Joseph Giguire and Robert J. Consterdine (all ex-POWs) also were killed due to drinking the with methanol laced drink, again traced to the group of Russians.

John Decoine and his fellow unfortunates were temporarily interred in Ettringen. Subsequently they were buried in the British War cemetery in Durnbach (Bavaria, G.) and finally in June 1948 brought to Holten (NL) to find their final resting place.

Today these four ex-Prisoners of War lie together in plot 4 of the Canadian War Cemetery Holten. They all died celebrating freedom due to methanol poisoning, just a few days before the end of the war in Europe.

John Decoine's tombstone is very special due to the inscription: it is in the Cree language and in Cree characters.

