

Robert Henke

MAJOR

HOPEFULLY YOU CAN GET
SOME INFO FROM THE
ARTICLES & THING I SENT
DAD & MOM DONATED
MOST OF THE ARMY THINGS
TO THE McLEOD MUSEUM
IN HUICHINSON MN & THE
MUSEUM IN FORT RIPLEY
ANOTHER GOOD SOURCE
OF INFO IS THE BOOK "DOG
FACES WHO SMILED THROUGH
TEARS" BY LT. COL. ANKRUM
AND AN ARMY AT DAWN BY
RICK ATKINSON

GOOD LUCK WITH THE
ANNIVERSARY!

*DONT NEED THIS BACK!
(SARED OR ARCHIVE)

Bob Henke

NO ONE DOES MORE
FOR VETERANS.



ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION

HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL HENKE MILBURN H		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 20 707 662	3. GRADE SGT	4. ARM OR SERVICE INF	5. COMPONENT NG
6. ORGANIZATION MOTOR POOL DET #1 SCHOOL TRPS FT BENNING GA		7. DATE OF SEPARATION 25 AUG 45	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEPARATION CENTER CAMP MC COY WISCONSIN		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 122 MAINE ST S HUTCHINSON MINN		10. DATE OF BIRTH 24 AUG 18	11. PLACE OF BIRTH HUTCHINSON MINN		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE 9		13. COLOR EYES HAZEL	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 5-9	16. WEIGHT 153 LBS.
17. NO. DEPEND.	18. RACE WHITE		19. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE		20. U.S. CITIZEN YES
21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. MANAGER-BAR 2-21.10		22. DATE OF INDUCTION 21 SEP 40			
23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 10 FEB 41		24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE HUTCHINSON MINNESOTA		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE	
26. REGISTERED YES NO X		27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO.		28. COUNTY AND STATE HUTCHINSON MINN	
29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE 124 S MAIN ST HUTCHINSON MINN		30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. RIFLEMAN 745			
31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE-DRIVERS BADGE		32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS TUNISIA			
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS SILVER STAR MEDAL GO 37 SEC #1 34TH INF DIV GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL		34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION NONE			
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES SMALLPOX 16 MAR 44 TYPHOID 8 SEP 44 TETANUS 14 JUL 44 OTHER (specify) TYPHUS 16 APR 44		36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE 15 JAN 42 DESTINATION E T O DATE OF ARRIVAL 25 JAN 42 22 DEC 43 N A T O 3 JAN 43 23 JUL 44 U S 3 AUG 44			
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE CONTINENTAL SERVICE 1 YEAR 11 MONTHS 27 DAYS FOREIGN SERVICE 2 YEARS 6 MONTHS 19 DAYS		38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD SGT			
39. PRIOR SERVICE NONE		40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVT RR 1-1 (DEMOBILIZATION) AR 615-365 15 DEC 44			
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED NONE		42. EDUCATION (Years) Grammar 8 High School 4 College 0			

MILITARY HISTORY

43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEARS 4 MONTHS 11 DAYS		44. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL \$ 300 THIS PAYMENT \$ 100	45. SOLDIER DEPOSITS NONE	46. TRAVEL PAY \$ 11.35	47. TOTAL AMOUNT. NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER 157.78 H L OLDENBURG MAJ FD
48. KIND OF INSURANCE X Nat. Serv. U.S. Govt. None					
49. HOW PAID X Allotment Direct to V.A.		50. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance 31 AUG 45	51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50) 30 SEP 45	52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH \$ 6.65	53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO X Continue Continue Only Discontinue
54. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED Milburn H Henke					
55. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) Edward D'Agosta 2D LT TC ASSISTANT ADJUTANT					

PAY DATA

INSURANCE NOTICE

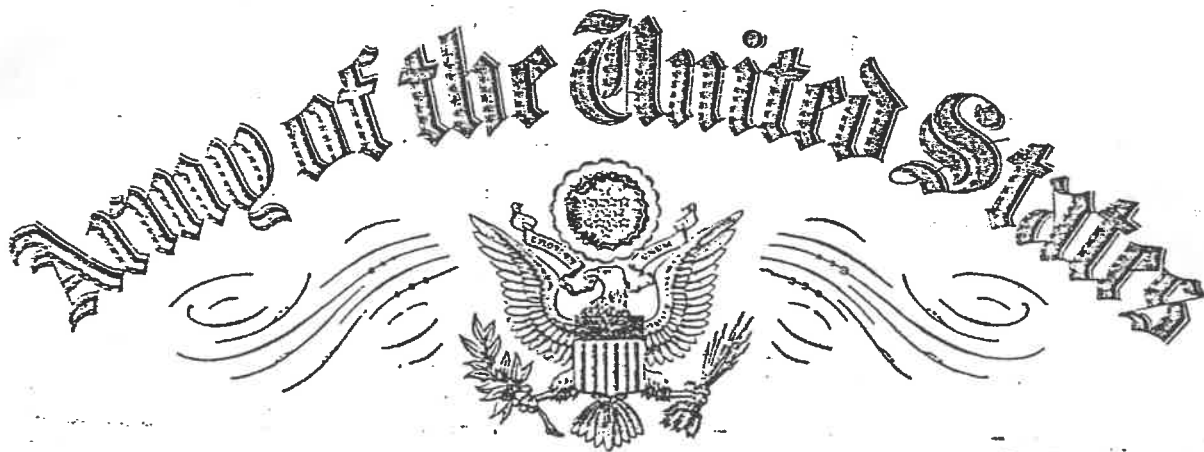
IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

54. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives)
EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER SERVICE MEDAL
AMERICAN DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL
SIX (6) OVERSEAS SERVICE BARS - NO TIME LOST UNDER AW 107
LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED
FOUR (4) DISCHARGE EMBLEMS ISSUED
ASR SCORE (12MAY45) 92

54. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED
Milburn H Henke

55. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature)
Edward D'Agosta 2D LT TC ASSISTANT ADJUTANT

OB 15-49-R 283
9-6-46



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

MILBURN H. HENKE, 20 707 662, SERGEANT
MOTOR POOL DETACHMENT #1 SCHOOL TROOPS FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

Army of the United States

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military
service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest
and Faithful Service to this country.*

Given at SEPARATION CENTER
CAMP MC COY, WISCONSIN

Date 25 AUGUST 1945

Thomas B Hammond

THOMAS B HAMMOND
MAJOR, AGD

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1971

Jim Klobuchar



EDITOR'S NOTE: On his way out to Litchfield (See Page 1A), Jim Klobuchar made a stop in Hutchinson. The following column resulted.

WAR BIOGRAPHERS choose to call him an historical footnote, this calm and agreeable small-town cafe-owner at Hutchinson, Minn.

Milburn Henke, though, has managed to evade all temptations to sound immortal.

"I must be the first historical footnote in history," he said, "Who answers to the name of Dink."

No others, in any case, have come forward to challenge the claim.

He never saw any reason to try to shed his rather un-gallant nickname, and a visitor sees no evidence in his tidy, freshly remodeled cafe of Milburn Henke's sudden if brief celebrity nearly three decades ago.

You must recall the picture, in the newspapers and news reels if you were old enough then, or the flashback anthologies of the war.

The boyish private saluting as he comes off the troopship ramp, the first American soldiers of World War II to land in Europe.

Milburn Henke poured a cup of coffee for the visitor. He is 52, a trim and dark-haired man without pretension but with an edge of whimsy. "For a while there with all the attention I got," he said, "it looked as though the army's plan was for me to win the war single-handed."

IT WAS RAW ACCIDENT, by and large, that the name should come up Henke when the colonel cast around for a man. The occasion, of course, demanded something dramatic, a man who could be presented to the world as the first American GI of the oncoming multitude which would one day assault fortress Europe.

"The fact that I was just sort of picked out of the hat doesn't change the memories, though," the small-town businessman said quietly. "I never tried to downgrade what it meant, I mean the symbol of America sending its boys to Europe to help win the war.

THAT DAY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

"The details are kind of fuzzy now. We went back as the guests of Northern Ireland on the 25th anniversary four years ago and they took me to the dock where we landed that day — Jan. 26, 1942 — and I had to tell them 'you mean this is where it was.'"

"But the important parts you don't forget. We were in the 34th Infantry Division coming over on a converted luxury ship called the *Strathard*. There were nearly 4,000 of us. We landed in Belfast and were sitting around a long time doing nothing when the colonel came around looking awfully busy and bothered. Apparently he asked my lieutenant for a man, and the guy said 'Hey, Henke, you go with him.'"

"ALL THE COLONEL wanted to know was whether could talk on the radio. I did, but don't ask me what I said. I mean it wasn't anything like the first words on the moon."

At that, the earnestly staged ceremony was not immune to one of those small disasters that overtake earnest stagings timelessly and globally. The plan was for a band to play electrifying martial music as the forces of deliverance from the American shores began marching down the ramp.

So they set up the band but the forces of deliverance came down the wrong ramp — hundreds of yards away from the straining musicians.

Eventually they got all of the martial-type people together and Henke was duly welcomed as the accredited vanguard of millions of GIs. From there he went to North Africa and got through the combat there without injury. But en route to the coast in preparation for the Italian invasion he suffered a fractured back in a truck accident. He returned to the states in 1944, and after the war, got married.

"My dad got into the cafe business in 1930," he said. "He never had the money to send me to college. I vowed I'd hock my shoes if I had to, to be sure my kids had the chance."

Bob Henke, 25, now in the Navy, graduated from Minnesota-Morris; his brother, Gary, 23, an accountant in Hutchinson, from Mankato State.

The Henkes' third child, Patty, 18, will be at Mankato State this fall.

THE FIRST GI in Europe in World War II thus fulfilled the truly important ambitions that were born in it. He is no military theorist. Vietnam bothers him, but mostly as a one-time fighting man who understands the frustrations of other fighting men caught in an impossible war.

He skimmed the pages of an old military magazine showing Pvt. Henke coming ashore. "I've always been a little self-conscious about it," he said, "but I think I'd like to have the picture enlarged and put on a wall here. Not big, just something to remember."

The visitor said he couldn't imagine a more appropriate picture for the newly painted wall behind the counter. Henke smiled in recollection again. "That English language," he said. "I wasn't married then. I remember the first date I had in England. I didn't know the expression they used for asking you to call on them again. I said, 'good-night' and the girl asked, 'Why not knock me up again tomorrow?'"

"It must have been a tough one to answer," the visitor conceded, "for an agreeable guy like Henke."

These are excerpts taken from the book "Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears" by Lt. Col. H.R. Ankrum. These were actual things that Milburn and Co. B. were involved in. They are the people he writes about. This is only to be used for your personal reading--cannot be used commercially in any way.

This takes place after the Co. had been in Claiborne, La., Northern Ireland. January 2, 1943, they boarded the ship "Empress of Australia", an English ship, and sailed through the straits of Gibraltar. At one time their ship bumped into a large Tanker. A Scottish sailor, operating the ship, "We had a bit of a bang in the barnacles" After they landed in North Africa, they got settled in. The Arabs were well trained in "the art of illegal appropriation" (Stealing). After a couple of battles, they were in a fort (they had captured) and could sleep in beds. But they were full of bedbugs. The Arabs appeared out of the bushes as the American soldiers marched, ready to trade their fruit, cigarettes, etc. for the things they had already stolen. Chaplain Father Hoffmann was with the guys all the time. He spoke several languages and gave last rites to all--protestants & catholics.

These men went on ahead of the 34th air. being the rail & tunnel troops etc.

The shooting stopped at Oran & Algiers Nov. 10, 1942 by Rangers & Commandos. The 34th Div. (our local guys were a part of) were in training there until Feb. 2, 1941. Then they moved to the front for the fighting. They were loaded on trucks to begin the 1,000 mile journey to the Tinisian Campaign. Nov. 30, 1942 the Commandos had gone ashore to take out the airfield and port by Bizerte. Sid Falconer, from Hutch. and 4 others were the only ones who survived out of the 58. The Germans killed all others as they went up or down the hill. The Germans were later defeated there. They went on and joined other Commandos on patrol at Ferryville. Christmas eve. they slept in a haystack on a farm owned by a French family. The next morning the family brought them fresh-baked bread. They had stayed up all night grinding the meal and then baking the bread. The American and English Commandos appreciated this as they had run out of food and they also knew the family had sacrificed their supply of food too. After they left this farm, they were in direct combat with the Germans. After the Bizerte raid and other actions, the Commandos were so depleted they could only work behind enemy lines. There was an Indian in their group who helped a lot. The National Guard was put in with them. One guy named Swede Nelson, had come from Kansas to pick corn in Iowa, became friends with National Guard (34th Div) and enlisted with them. The German planes were strafing and bombing them. At Faid Pass 125 recruits arrived. that should have gone to North Ireland for training. None of them knew anything about combat fighting. Fondouk Pass--Feb. 11, 1943. Kasserine Pass Feb. 14th. Many Americans were killed by the German tanks and airplane strafing. The men said it was like trying to move the Empire state building with a wrecking bar, while on roller

skates. They blasted our tanks and set them on fire. Some escaped, but many did not. Major Moore had asked for help but did not get it. Feb. 17th. He was escorted to Gen. Patton's headquarters and asked by Patton "What the hell happened to my son-in-law, John Walters?" Major Moore answered "What the hell happened to my regiment?" Patton said, "I don't give a damn about your regiment, I want to know what happened to Walters" Major Moore replied, "My interest is in my regiment" and asked to be escorted back to his regiment. The Germans tried infiltrating American lines by wearing Am. uniforms from those they had killed. Americans were forced to surrender. They were taken prisoners and marched back to Tunisia. 1,628 Americans were killed or wounded. They had all fought so hard, (This was the Armored Division--not Co. B). At this time the factories back in America had started making the Sherman tanks--heavier than ones being used here. They were being sent to British troops in Suez Canal. One ship was sunk by Bermuda. By the end of Jan., 241 Sherman tanks arrived in North Africa.

Feb. 14 Co. B 133rd. Inf. & 135th Inf. took over from the French batallion. Col. Robert Miller, from Appleton, MN. was in charge. They dug out positions in the hills and knocked out German tanks coming down the road. Surprise attack. Then ordered to go and take Kef el Amar Pass. They dug into fox holes waiting for the enemy. Captain Doyle visited the men in their fox holes. One man asked him if this maneuver was going to be as bad as the Louisiana maneuvers. He said, "Yes, but not worse than the mosquitoes at Camp Ripley, Mn. in 1937." This gave the guys all a chuckle. After the fighting, relief came from the British and Canadians, while our men could withdraw to Ref el Amar Pass--walking ---tired --then trucks came and they squeezed on as many men and equipment as possible. Arrived at the Pass--blew it up--marched on--saw American uniforms and American trucks --turned out to be Germans--our guys fired upon them--killed, wounded and took them prisoners. Co. B. 133rd. was led by Sgt. Herb Ralston, on patrol, led his men safely through enemy lines in darkness back to their batallion. Fighting again began against the Germans. (Sgt. John Vassey, also on patrol, would some day become Chm. of joint chief of staff in Wash. D.C.) (He was interviewed in his part-time office at Camp Ripley, Mn. His retired home is Garrison MN.) Our men had to clear out many land mines placed by the Germans, before advancing. Many lives were lost at Faid-Kasserine Pass. During withdrawal from Hajeb el Arou to Kef-el-Amar Pass, Gen Patton visited the Batallion and complained that the men were not moving fast enough. Billman said there were too many German tanks ahead. Patton said "Wht don't you take your bayonets and go out and charge them." Billman and others said they were surprised no one shot him. Many officers had taken off their stripes before going into battle as the officers were the ones the enemy liked to take prisoner and interrogate and punish. Patton made them all sew them back on. He said "Take those hills or bring me back a truck load of dog tags". General Bradley was more liked. When he visited He sat down and talked to the men. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. visited the men and complimented the 1st. Ranger Batallion for their work. (These were men mostly from the 34th Div. They were called Darby's Rangers. Clarence Treumer, Hutch. man was in this group.) Now our men had to cross the open plains. The Germans were in the hills and opened fire. Many of our men were killed. Around Mar. 30 reinforcements came. The Germans were finally defeated April 10th. When they were advancing, Col. Robert Miller was hit in the neck, but he kept going. His wounds were treated later. When they completed crossing the plains and were in the hills, Milburn said "He saw how the Germans with field glasses could have counted the freckles on our fannies". Now they saw the fields of red poppies. 1,075 men were killed of 34 th Div in this battle of Fondouk Pass. The gruesome task of piling the bodies ont trucks to be hauled away for burial. This battle was to divert the enemy from the English 8th Army front line to enable Montgomery forces to advance. Much controvercy came out of this between the men. After this, the 34th Div. was called up to take Hill 609. This was heavily & highly defended by the Germans. Our men had Sherman tanks now so better prepared than last time. This was around April 25. They had to fight with guts, guns, and grenades. The Hill 609 was built like a fortress with caves in it. There was a chain of 4 hills together. 34th Div. started up the hill at 2A.M. in the dark, quietly, no one talking. At 5A.M. they were on top of the Germans--a surprise attack.. April 28th they were still fighting and advancing. The 34 Div. radio communications was knocked out. A German counter attack was spotted--couldn't warn the others, so Seeley had to run the message. He was being shot at by the Germans but made it through, over a small hill to give the message. This was Co. B, 34 Div. our local guys that were under heavy fire. They had dug fox holes. Milburn dove into his and Frank Meshimens dove in on top of him. Milburn said "Good thing as Meskimens

was hit in the fanny and] would have been hit on the head". The American with heavy artillery moved forward under heavy fire. An Arab sheep-herder came down the hill and lined his sheep up making the shape of an arrow pointing to the American observation post. That gave the Germans a target for plane strafing and bombing. The Arab was killed. During the night, the Germans wiped out a whole American battallion. The 34th Div. continued fighting even though many men were ill but had to fight on. At 5:15 A.M. Co. B advanced again. Tanks went first, then the soldiers with rifle and machine guns--up the hill--rugged terrain-- They were weak with vomiting and diarrhea, but pressed on. Capt. Doyle collapsed. He was taken care of by medics later. Some Germans were captured. About April 30. Capt. Doyle rejoined his troops. May 1, Germa with white flag, faked surrender, but were noted that they had weapons so 34 Div. opened fire. All Germans were killed or taken captive. Hill 609 was taken by "The latrineless brigade" It was Hill 609 that Milburn received the Silver Star for helping Lt. Sprenger uner heavy enemy fire. Now the 34 Div. was on their way to Tunis. As the Germans retreated, they booby trapped the area. The 34 Div. had to clear the area before moving on. They came upon Italian soldiers chained to machine guns to keep them from retreating. Germans were captured and the Americans advanced to Tunis with no enemy to fight there. Civilians gave the Americans cheese and wine they had stored in the sand dunes. 250,000 Germans surrendered. Montgomery wanted to take all the credit for this in the press, but Eisenhower tried to correct the press on this fact. The Germans and ItALIANS REALized they could not fulfill Hitler and Mussolini's dreams of conquest. Some of our men had gone for 3 months without a real bath. Gen Patton strode in and fined them 10.dollars for being dirty. The men were thirsty and hungry. After the Tunisian battle was over, May 20, 1943, they had a huge African campaign parade with 133 Inf., 135 Inf. 34 Div.. with our local guys leading. During the cleanup, our men had to be so careful as the Germans had booby trapped their dead soldiers, tanks, and jeeps. By this time, sulpha drugs were being used for the soldier's wounds. Our casualties were 70,341 men. 4,254 were from our 34 Div. They had a Memorial Service by a field of poppies. The killed were all named. There was not a dry eye in the place. Many of the soldiers should have received commisions, but they didn't. After the cleanup in Tunisia was done, the men received a rest period. When they were camped outside, the Arabs stole their clothing. The men also received mail call. The end of July a men were back in Oran in camp. They had a short period where they could swim in the Mediterranean. They received more mail from home. Sep.2,1943 a ship USS Parker dropped off Japanese Americans to fill out the 34Div. 135 inf. These men were anxious to show their patrotism to America. They became good fighters in Italy 100 Btn. On Sept. 3, 1943, planning for the invasion of Italy began, It was at this time thst Milburn was in a jeep accident that broke his back and he was hospitalized. He had been promoted to 1st Sgt. Clinton Tracy took over his job. While Milburn remained in the hospital, the rest of the 34 Div. went to Italy to another time of bloody battles and loss of many lives. Cassino was considered the battle of battles. Angio was called the death trap. Then came Rome and points north, the push to Pisa, Appenines Line--1944-1945. Again many were killed or taken prisoner. After the war was over, all prisoners were freed. The 34 Div. Reunion in 1981 was the first time many had seen each other in 36 years. 1986 was when the author, Ankrum visited the Co. B. Reunion and interviewed each one for this book.

This book written by Lt. Col. H.R. Ankrum
Graphic Publishing Co.
Lake Mills, Iowa, 50450

Each infantry regiment was 3,118 men
Total Infantry strength was 9,354
There were 3 Infantry regiments per Division.

The 34 th Division--The Red Bull Division lost more men than any other
Division in the European Conflict.

(PL)

Sept. 1940--inlisted in the National Guards(135 Inf. 34 Div. Co.B)
Feb. 1941--left for supposedly 1 year training in Camp Claiborne, La.

Aug., 1941--Cino married *Letters I received from Milburn that I didn't save-*

Sept.--food poisoning--several in hospital--all o.k.

Nov. 1941--28 year olds were released to go home.

Nov.--1941--Eiler Peterson out

Dec. 7 --in town with basketball team--heard news of Pearl Harbor
All returned to Camp Claiborne

Dec. 8 or 9 sent to Fort Barancas, Fla. to guard the coasts(Jack Davy)

End of Dec. Back to Camp Claiborne and sent to Camp in New Jersey.

See letters---

Jan 1942 left for N. Ireland--see letters

May 22, 1942--N. Ireland--Klawitter and Milburn to see Bitzer and others
at their camp--also saw Taylor

JUNE 2, 42--Bruce Brummond had left for the service.

Aug. ,42--Sid Falconer had left for the Commandos.

Aug. , 42--Milburn wrestling around in tent and hit head on bed(bunk)-
had 6 stitches.

Sept., 42--Bob Blume and Gar Krasean left for the U.S. for officers tr.

Sept.--glad I'm not going west with Marlys and other Hutch girls.

Oct. 42--Bob and Gar home.

Nov. 42--Norman Johnson airforce officer

Nov. 42--received lots of Christmas boxes of baked goods, candy etc.(16)

Dec. 16, 42--in England

Jan 6, 43--in North Africa

Mar. 30, 43--Tunisia, N. Africa

Apr. 12,43--received Hutch Leader telling of Wall and Miller being killed

May 9,43--Germans pretty well washed up

May 17,43--Cleaning up after the Germans--much of their equipment left.

May 28,43--at Rest Camp--swimming in the Mediteranean

May 22,43--tells of being hit by shrapnel before when in battle

May 29, 43--received Hutch Leader telling of Nelson Trent's death

July 25,43--Churchill home and new Comm.Fred Heller

Aug. 19.43--I had asked him about Springler who he had helped in battle

Aug.,43--Arnold Klawitter, Co. Clerk left ~~to go home~~ so Milburn taking
his place with Clint Tracy assistant. *Back with Co. in action*

Sep. 43--Went to Sidi Belle Abbe--met George Ewald in Red Cross Center

Sep. 5,43--hurt in jeep--weapons carrier accident

Sep, 16,43--in hospital

Sep,26,43--in hospital

Oct. 10,43--in hospital

Oct. 14, 43--in hospital

Oct. 16,43--in hospital

Oct. 21,43--in hospital

Oct. 24,43--in hospital--nurse Miss Rose put a rose in a test tube
and taped it to his bed.

Oct. 26,43--in hospital--doing some exercises for his back

Mentions Kring and Rathbun with old unit must be pretty
busy now--(couldn't mention that they were in Italy fighting)

Oct. 30,43--I had told him about Jorgenson being home and he said he
had seen him get hurt and lost 1 eye--also Barney Karstens
who lost both eyes

Nov.5,43--Gets a day out of hospital to go by bus into town

Nov. 15,43--thinks he will be out of hospital on limited duty
but doesn't know where

Nov. 26,43--at a different camp--different address-limited duty

Nov. 30,43--in replacement camp

Dec. 9,43--still in replacement center--I had told him about MaryJo pregnant

Aug. 24, '43 -- Milburn celebrated his birthday at Sidi Bel abbes with Ken Zajick, Ken
Rathbun, Glenn Kring

- Dec. 12, 43--I told him about Arnold Klawitter getting hurt--he knew
- Dec. 12, 43--Leroy Lhotka visited Milburn
- Dec. 17, 43--heard Kring and Rathbun in hospital
- Dec. 21, 43--Don Caspers in same town
- Dec. 24, 43--Remembers that a year ago he was on a ship on way to N. Africa(42)
- Dec. 30, 43--new address--now at 7th station hosp--not a patient--
doesn't know what his job will be
- Jan 16, 44--Red Carrigan had been killed
- Jan. 16, 44--library almost finished
- Jan 26, 44--worked in library--liked it--now has to move
- Feb. 3, 44--back at original camp--doesn't like it
- Feb. 13, 44--in same camp--saw Henry Nelson, Oscar Kehert, Gil. Dewing,
Don Caspers, Don Rethlake, Aaron Tayler. Saw Virgil Prieve--
he's coming along O.K.
- Feb. 15, 44--might have a job driving a vehicle
- Feb. 16, 44--Is driving a truck
- Feb. 25, 44--heard about Maryjo's cousin getting killed. Is in Motor Pool--
In letter he received from me I told him about John Schultze's
death.
- Mar. 6, 44--in motor pool--then back to another camp--Didn't like replacement
center
- Mar. 16, 44--back to motor pool--driving a car for different generals--
has to learn the streets
- Mar. 11, 44--same as 16 (above)
- Mar. 19, 44--Same " " "
- Apr. 3, 4, 44--driving his own car--responsible for care of it
- Apr. 24, 44--was driving for a general--didn't like him as he was supposed
to bow and open the door for him--so he got another driver
- Apr. 29, 44--still same--driving
- May 5, 44--driving for a special officer now--letter all cut up--
censored--
- May 8, 44--Same as before--driving
- May 18, 44-- " " " " --letter again all cut up by censor
- May 19, 44-- " " " " --started kittenball game. Heard from
Kenny Rathbun, he's sweating out getting home too--
Ed Klawitter 2 furloughs--Truemer back in the U.S.
- June 1, 44--Driving a nice General and is seeing a lot of the country--
saw old masque--went inside--Saw Leroy Lhotka in town
The day before was Memorial Day so had special ceremony--
Truemer back home
- June 12, 44--at rest camp--swimming etc.--read about the invasion--
received my letter telling about Lyle graduating from H.S.
- June 24, 44--still in rest camp--sweating out coming home
- July 10, 44--Kring and Rathbun home--we should not write any more as
he hopes to be coming home soon

aug. 11, 44 - Milburn arrives home on the train to Kansas. His folks & Gola meet him.
 (The reason these places in N. Africa were not
 named is because that was secret and censored.
 All of his letters were addressed "somewhere in North Africa")

aug. 20, 44 - Milburn & Gola married at P.L.C. So on 1 week honeymoon up north
 to Mattadopi Resort on Cross Lake.

Sept. 5, 44 - Milburn reports to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Then to Ft. Benning, Ga.

aug. 25, 45 - Milburn was discharged at Camp McCoy, Wis.

Dates of Milburn's time in the army in WW2

He joined the National Guard(Co. B 133rd. Infantry 34th Division (Red Bull) in September, 1940. They left for Louisiana in February, 1941 which was to be one year's training. December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor was bombed. Then Milburn was in a group sent to guard the coast along New Orleans. After this they were sent to New Jersey where they waited until January 15, 1942, when they boarded the ship , a converted British ~~steamer~~ steamer, HMTS Straithaird. They were not told where they were going. On January 26, 1942 they landed in Belfast North Ireland. Milburn was chosen to be the first GI to set foot on foreign soil in the European Theater. They were in training there on some of large estates. This was near Coleraine, County Londonderry. They were moved to the Tynan Abbey estate, County Armagh. In November, 1942 they left for North Africa landing in Tunisia. There they fought tough battles against the Germans who were already dug in to the hills. Many of the men lost their lives or were wounded. One battle, Hill 609, Lt. Leland was wounded. Milburn crawled under heavy fire and applied a tourniquet on his wound. For this Milburn later received the Silver Star. They finally won over the Germans. The first part of September they were planning an invasion of Italy. Milburn was in a jeep that had a large gun mounted in the back. As they were going through the mountains, they hit a sharp curve and the jeep overturned pinning Milburn under the gun mount. He was hospitalized in Oran while the others in his Company went on to Italy. He was hospitalized for three months and then was placed on limited duty, working in the camp library and driving for a General, In August, 1944 he was granted s leave to come home. He and Iola Christensen were married August 20, 1944. He was sent to a Camp in Texas for a short time and then to Fort Benning, Georgia. He was honorably discharged in August, 1945--just lacking one month of being in the Army for 5 years.

* RECALLED BY IOLA HENKE (MILBURN'S WIFE)

Hutchinson Tuesday Leader

April 28, 1998

Hutchinson's most famous war her

hero dies

■ Milburn Henke gained international acclaim as the first U.S. soldier to set foot on European soil during World War II.

By **TERRY DAVIS**
Staff Writer

World War II made household names out of competing generals — Patton, Eisenhower, Rommel, Montgomery, MacArthur and Goering. But in early 1942, just weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, an infantryman from Hutchinson, Minn., gained worldwide attention as the first U.S. soldier to set foot on European soil.

Milburn Henry "Dink" Henke, whose picture on the cover of Life Magazine made him one of America's

most recognizable foot soldiers, died Sunday at the Veteran's Memorial Hospital in Minneapolis at age 79.

The man who would be known locally after the war as a restaurant proprietor for 35 years, gained his international fame on Jan. 26, 1942, when Maj. Gen. Russell Hartle selected him, as a representative of Company B of the 133rd infantry, to walk down the gangplank of the ferry boat known as Chateau Thierry. The boat had ferried Henke and his comrades from the H.M.S. Strathaird, the ship that had brought them across the Atlantic Ocean from New York to Belfast, Ireland.

Hutchinson's National Guard unit, Company B, had been the first to be called to active duty in January 1941 and was sent to Camp Claiborne, La., for training. Henke had enlisted in the unit in September 1940 when it appeared likely that he would be drafted.

As the chosen soldier, Henke had

to re-enact his trip down the plank to Irish soil six times for news photographers. He met British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once he made it to dry land.

Two days later, as word spread across the U.S. of Henke's Irish landfall, the Hutchinson native went on NBC Radio to talk with his family and girlfriend, Iola Christensen. Their romance, then fully exposed to millions of radio listeners, eventually led to their marriage after Henke's European tour of duty was over.

Henke's good fortune in being at his general's right hand when the boat docked led to further interviews throughout 1942. Later in London, he was introduced to Eleanor Roosevelt and the Queen of England.

In late 1942, Henke took part in the invasion of North Africa, landing at Oran and later fighting into Tunisia. In a fight known as Hill 320, Henke earned the Silver Star for helping his lieutenant who had been shot in the

leg.

While training in 1943 near Oran for the invasion of Italy, Henke suffered a fractured back when a weapons carrier he was riding overturned. The injury eventually landed him back in the United States where he married Iola during a 30-day leave to Minnesota in August 1944. After assignments in Texas, Georgia and finally Camp McCoy, Wis., Henke was discharged in August 1945.

"He was a patriot," his wife Iola said Monday. "He was so proud he could serve his country."

Funeral services for Milburn Henry Henke will take place at 2 p.m. Wednesday at Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson with interment in the Peace Lutheran Church Cemetery. Visitation will take place from 5 to 9 p.m. today (Tuesday) and from 8 to 11 a.m. Wednesday at the Dobratz-Hantge Chapel in Hutchinson, and also one hour prior to the services at the church.



Milburn Henke in

Wednesday
APRIL 29, 1998

Metro/State

B
SECTION

StarTribune

Milburn Henke, first U.S. combat soldier in Britain, dies



Milburn Henke, 1958. During World War II he saved a wounded officer under fire. This earned him a Silver Star.

HUTCHINSON, MINN. — Milburn Henke was a young Minnesota Guardsman when he took a historic step more than a half-century ago.

He was the first U.S. combat soldier to set foot in the British Isles during World War II. He walked down a gangplank from a ferry that had carried soldiers across the Atlantic Ocean to Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Henke, of Hutchinson, died Sunday of pancreatic cancer at the Minneapolis Veterans Medical Center. He was 79.

"He was proud, but he al-

ways said it wasn't just him. He represented all the American soldiers," Iola, his wife of 53 years, said Tuesday.

Henke was 18 when he enlisted in the 34th Infantry Division, known as the Red Bull Division, to train with friends. The 34th was made up of National Guardsmen from Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota.

In 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt mobilized the Nation-

Obituary

al Guard. When the United States entered the war, the 34th was chosen as the first division to be deployed overseas, according to the Minnesota National Guard history.

On Jan. 26, 1942, Pfc. Henke was chosen as the first man from Company B of the 133rd Infantry Regiment to walk down the gangplank.

Henke went on to North Africa with the 34th Division and was awarded a Silver Star for rescuing a wounded officer under tank fire. But as the division was loading to cross the Medi-

terranean, Henke broke his back when a weapons carrier he was riding in overturned and landed on him.

He remained on limited duty while the 34th headed for Italy. He was discharged as a sergeant in August 1945 and returned to Hutchinson, where he managed his own restaurant until 1980.

In addition to his wife, survivors include two sons, a daughter and four grandchildren.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. today at Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson.

— *Associated Press*

Milburn Henke, first WWII combat GI in Britain, dies

Famous landing put Minnesotan in the history books; he later won Silver Star for saving officer

Associated Press

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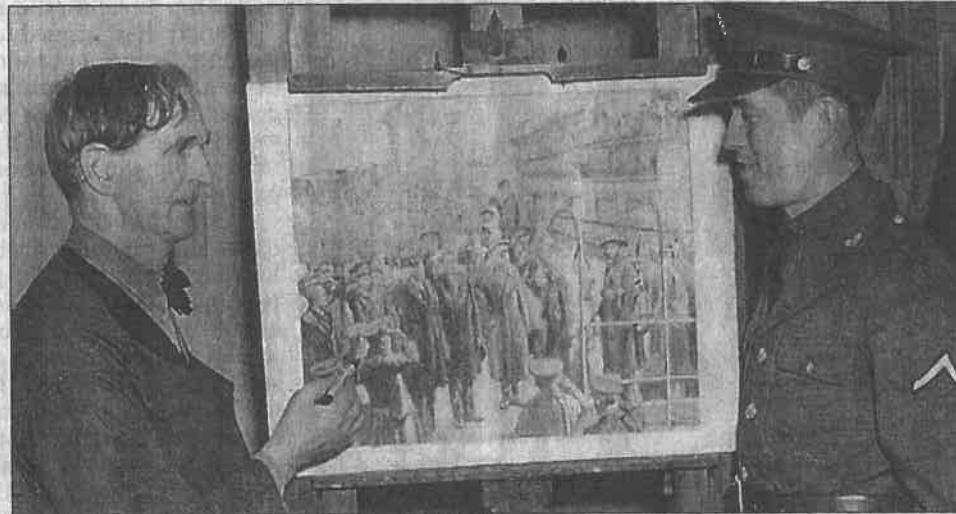
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When the United States entered the



Associated Press file photo

In May 1942, Milburn Henke of Hutchinson, Minn., met Irish artist William Conor, who showed the soldier his painting depicting the arrival of U.S. troops.

war, the 34th was chosen as the first division to be deployed overseas, according to the Minnesota National Guard history.

On Jan. 26, 1942, Pfc. Henke was cho-

sen as the first man from Company B of the 133rd Infantry Regiment to walk down the gangplank.

He thought he had been chosen for an unloading detail. He reenacted his steps

several times for photographers.

"They made quite a big deal about it," Henke said in a 1991 interview with the Star Tribune. "I got clippings from every state in the union, South America — I had a barracks bag full, and my parents had two bags."

Henke went on to North Africa with the 34th Division and was awarded a Silver Star for rescuing a wounded officer under tank fire. But as the division was loading to cross the Mediterranean, Henke broke his back when a weapons carrier he was riding in overturned and landed on him.

He remained on limited duty while the 34th headed for Italy.

He was discharged as a sergeant in August 1945 and returned to Hutchinson, where he managed his own restaurant until 1980.

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Services will be held at 2 p.m. today at Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson.

MINNESOTA

M D

SECTION

10 PAGES

Milburn Henke, Minnesotan who made military history in WWII, dies at 79

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Henke was 18 when he enlisted in the 34th Infantry Division, known as the "Red Bull" Division, to train with friends. The 34th was made up of National Guardsmen from Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota.

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Henke remained on limited duty while the 34th headed for Italy. He was discharged as a sergeant in August 1945 and returned to Hutchinson, where he managed his own restaurant until retiring in 1980.

Henke and his wife married in 1944 while he was on leave. In addition to his wife, survivors include two sons, a daughter and four grandchildren.

His funeral is scheduled for 2 p.m. today at Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson. He will be buried in the church cemetery.



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Milburn Henke was 23 when he took this historic step as the first U.S. combat soldier to set foot in the British Isles during World War II.

First Yank in WWII Europe spoke quietly for all

By Chuck Haga
Star Tribune Staff Writer

HUTCHINSON, MINN. — Milburn Henke was a national symbol most of his life, a duty he bore with quiet dignity.

On Memorial Day, he would put on his service cap and join in the parade down Main Street, past the little cafe his dad had started in 1930. It was one of several cafes Milburn Henke helped run for 50 years, before and after World War II.

"We marched in the parade every year," Iola Henke said. "He was very proud to have been in the service."

Milburn Henke also would report on Memorial Day to the

local cemeteries, where he paid his respects to the Hutchinson men who had gone to school with him, went to war with him and did not come home with him.

They didn't get the attention he did, in life or in death, which Henke thought was wrong.

"He said he represented all the men who landed over there," Iola Henke said. "He didn't take it as a personal thing, him being first."

But he was.

When the 34th (Red Bull) Division arrived in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Jan. 26, 1942

— just seven weeks after Pearl Harbor — those thousands of young men from Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota were greeted as the vanguard of the multitudes who would liberate Europe.



Pvt. Milburn Henke, 1942

With military bands, columns of British generals and the world's newsreel cameras all waiting on the dock, the Americans were told to pick one soldier to step off the troop ferry first — the first fightin' Yank on European soil.

HENKE continues on B5:

— He fought alongside friends from his hometown.



Jim Gehrz/Star Tribune

Milburn Henke's widow, Iola, 83, from her home in Hutchinson, Minn., said her husband always marched in the Memorial Day parade. He was the first U.S. soldier to set foot on European soil when his division arrived in Northern Ireland in 1942.

HENKE from B1

Despite his fame, GI remained modest

"There were nearly 4,000 of us," Milburn Henke said in a 1971 interview. "We landed in Belfast and were sitting around a long time doing nothing when the colonel came around looking awfully busy and bothered. Apparently he asked my lieutenant for a man, and the guy said 'Hey, Henke, you go with him.' "I went, and that's all there was to it."

A small step for a man

As Henke strode down the gangplank, bands struck up the national anthem. He paused, smiled and saluted, and a photographer's shutter clicked.

The picture of the young man from central Minnesota stepping off his ship and into history went all over the world, and Henke received newspaper clippings from every state and many foreign countries.

"I had a barracks-bag full," he said, "and my parents had two bags."

A general asked him whether he could talk to reporters.

"I can if I have to," he said.

He also spoke on the radio.

"But don't ask me what I said," he told an interviewer years later. "I mean, it wasn't anything like the first words on the moon."

"For a while there, with all the attention I got, it looked as though the Army's plan was for me to win the war single-handed."

He didn't, but he did take part in the North Africa landings and received a Silver Star in Tunisia, crawling under heavy German fire to reach a wounded officer and apply a tourniquet to his leg, saving his life.

He was about to invade Italy when a weapons carrier he was riding in rolled over and he suffered a fractured back. After four months in hospitals in



This 1941 file photo shows Henke, right, being welcomed to Belfast, Northern Ireland, by British Army officers, politicians, military bands and cheering onlookers.

Remembering the stories

Members of the Association of Personal Historians will be at the Mall of America today to help people begin to document their elders' life stories, including the wartime experiences of veterans.

"Since 9/11, more and more people are documenting their family's life stories through books, audio, video, legacy letters, quilts, photos" and other materials, said Michael McIntee, a personal historian and organizer of the event.

He and other members of the association will be at the mall's Sears Court from noon to 5 p.m. to offer ideas and assistance in getting started.

Oran and Casablanca, Henke was sent home.

He and Iola were married in 1944 and spent their honeymoon in northern Minnesota, and at a cabin that Henke and his father had built before the war at Lake Stella, north of Hutchinson.

After another year in the Army, which he and Iola spent at Fort Benning, Ga., the war ended and the Henkes returned to Hutchinson, the hamburger shop and the Lake Stella cabin. They raised three children.

'We didn't know'

When he and the other local men in the 34th Division left at the start of the war, "that just took the heart right out of Hutchinson," Iola Henke said. "It was much smaller then. But everybody who was left pitched in and helped."

Fighting alongside friends

from home was both a blessing and a curse. "He was with men he grew up with, and to see them get killed was really terrible.

"He wrote as often as he could, and I wrote about every other day. We numbered the letters to make sure we knew if any failed to get through. Of course, they were censored. And we didn't have TV like they do now, so we didn't know what was going on. I don't think I could have taken that."

Carl Henke displayed the famous picture of his son in his cafe. But he retired soon after Milburn came home, and Iola doesn't remember it hanging there.

"Milburn had pictures of himself at home that he put up," she said.

On the 25th anniversary of his moment in the world's spotlight, a Belfast TV station brought Henke back over.

"I'd like to say this," he said

as he returned to the dockyards. "They say I was the very first American soldier on European soil. Fine, but there was nothing special about me."

The dockworkers disagreed.

They "hoisted him to their shoulders and, shouting and singing, paraded him around the dock," according to a 1967 Associated Press report. "The impromptu demonstration ended at Dineen's Saloon."

He was invited back in 1992 on the 50th anniversary, and Iola went along. "They took us all around to where they had done their [training] maneuvers," she said. "I had heard him talk about all these places, and then I was able to see them."

Milburn Henke died in 1998, age 79. He was buried in Peace Cemetery north of Hutchinson. Veterans will see that a flag marks his grave for Memorial Day along with the graves of others who 63 years ago stepped off a ship in Belfast harbor to bands playing, generals saluting, people cheering.

"I was just sort of picked out of a hat," he once said. "But I never tried to downgrade what it meant: [I was] the symbol of America sending its boys to Europe to help win the war."

Chuck Haga is at crhaga@startribune.com.

Milburn was a lifetime member of Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson. He was an active member of the Hutchinson American Legion Post # 96, Forty and Eight, the Hutchinson Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post # 906, Military Order of the Cooties # 65, Disabled American Veterans. Milburn was also active in helping with the Special Olympics. Since retirement, Milburn and his wife, Iola, enjoyed going to Mesa, AZ for the winter months, where they owned a trailer. As a youth, Milburn enjoyed playing baseball. He was also very fond of reading, hunting, fishing, the Minnesota Twins, playing pool, continuing his father's coin collection, and walking. He especially liked to spend time with his family and watch his grandsons play baseball. Milburn and Iola celebrated 53 years of marriage, before Milburn passed away.

Milburn became a patient at the Minneapolis Veterans Hospital on April 13, before he peacefully passed away on Sunday, April 26, 1998.

Milburn is survived by his

Wife, Iola Henke of Hutchinson, MN;

Sons, Robert Henke and his wife, NoReen of Dassel, MN and

Gary Henke and his wife, Mary of Hutchinson, MN;

Daughter, Patricia Brinkman and her husband, Dale of Glencoe, MN;

Grandchildren, Scott and Chris Henke of Hutchinson, MN and

Ryan and Lindsay Brinkman of Glencoe, MN;

Brother, Eugene Henke and his wife, Mildred of Chaska, MN;

Sister, Beverly Klawitter of Fergus Falls, MN;

Aunts, Emma and Meta Homan of Hutchinson, MN;

Brother-in-law, Lyle Christensen and his wife, Eleanore of Mesa, AZ;

Sister-in-law, Phyllis Bahr of West Concord, MN and

many nieces, nephews and friends.

Milburn was preceded in death by his parents and Brother-in-law, Oliver Klawitter.

Fellowship and refreshments will take place at Peace Lutheran Church after the committal service at Oakland Cemetery.

Milburn Henry Otto Henke was born on August 24, 1918, on a farm which was located on Lake Hook, in Bear Lake Township, McLeod County, Minnesota. He was the son of Carl and Louise (Wendt) Henke. Milburn was baptized as an infant on September 29, 1918, by Pastor G.E. Fritzke, and was confirmed in his faith as a youth on March 29, 1931, by Pastor W.J. Schulze, both at Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson. His family moved to Hutchinson in 1921, where Milburn had attended the elementary and high school. Milburn graduated from the Hutchinson High School in 1936. He then got involved in the well drilling business with Tom McLoughlin and later worked for his father at Henke's Cafe.

In October, 1940, Milburn enlisted in the National Guard. His unit (Company B, 135 Infantry, 34th Division) was sent to Camp Claiborne, LA, in February of 1941. Company B was in this camp, until after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At this time, his regiment was split up and he was sent with his company to Florida to guard the coast. On January 26, 1942, their outfit landed in Ireland for a years training. He was the first soldier chosen to step off the gangplank, thus receiving world-wide publicity. After their year in Ireland they were sent to North Africa, where they were in rough combat. There, Milburn earned the Silver Star at Hill 320 helping Lt. Springer, who had been hit under heavy fire from the Germans. Milburn was in a jeep accident where he hurt his back and was in the hospital in Oran and Casablanca for 3 1/2 months. He then worked in a library and later drove a staff car, for a General. In the meantime, his outfit had left him behind and went into Italy. In August of 1944, Milburn came back on furlough to Hutchinson.

On August 20, 1944, Milburn was united in marriage to Iola Christensen at the Peace Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minnesota. This union was blessed with the birth of 2 sons, Robert and Gary and daughter, Patricia. Soon after their marriage, he was stationed in Texas and then in Fort Benning, GA. Milburn was honorably discharged and returned to his home in Hutchinson, Minnesota, in August of 1945.

When returning to Hutchinson, Milburn again worked for his father at Henke's Cafe, until leasing his own restaurant on July 22, 1949. Milburn's restaurant was located on Highway 7 and 22, also calling it Henke's Cafe. On January 1, 1960, his lease expired and he purchased Reko's Cafe (40 Main Street, North) and also renamed it Henke's Cafe. In 1968, when the new Main Street was put in Hutchinson, he tore down the old cafe and built a new one. He owned and operated this cafe, until September 15, 1980. at which time he sold it to Carol Fransen.