

## **Private Andrew J. Kulwicki, 339<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and Alan Kulwicki, NASCAR Champion Driver**

by James Earl Green

Earlier this year, I was browsing the website of "Detroit's Own" Polar Bear Memorial Association. I was scanning the lists of casualties on the Honor Roll, when a familiar surname caught my attention: **Kulwicki**.

The soldier was Andrew J. Kulwicki. He is listed as dying from disease on January 28, 1919. He was from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and was a private in Company K, 339<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

I knew of **Alan** Kulwicki, the Milwaukee native who was a NASCAR racing champion and Winston Cup winner. He died in a light aircraft accident in 1993; however, he is still well-remembered in Milwaukee.

Since Alan and Andrew had the same surname and same hometown, I wondered if they were related. I emailed Mike Grobbel, asking if he knew. Mike got back to me very quickly, with evidence showing that Private Andrew Kulwicki was the great-uncle of Alan Kulwicki (the brother of Alan's grandfather).

Mike Grobbel referred me to an article by Tom Wagner on the **RacingWisconsin.com** website. The article, "Remembering Alan Kulwicki," mentions Alan's uncle "Len" and Alan's father "Gerry."

The 1940 U.S. Census record shows Len ("Leonard," age 13) and his brother Gerry ("Jerome," age 10) as the sons of John A. Kulwicki (age 53) in Milwaukee.

### **More about Private Andrew Kulwicki**

Andrew J. Kulwicki was born November 25, 1889.

Andrew is listed in the 1900 U.S. Census with his family in Ward 14 in the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The family consisted of the father Ignatz Kulwicki, mother Anna, and their children: sons John and Andrew (age 10), and daughter Marie. The family is listed as having immigrated in 1899. The birthplace for all family members is listed as "Poland (Ger)".

The 1910 US Census record shows John Kulwicki (age 23) and Andrew Kulwicki (age 20) as the sons of Ignatz Kulwicki and Anna Kulwicki.

In the 1917 Milwaukee City Directory, Andrew is listed as a "laborer." He was living with his widowed mother at 871 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Milwaukee. "Jonathan" Kulwicki was living near by; his occupation is listed as "coremkr" (core maker).

In the 1918 Milwaukee City, "USA" is listed after Andrew's name, meaning that he was in the armed services at that time.

On Andrew Kulwicki's draft registration card, he listed his occupation as "core maker." He was single, medium height, had gray eyes and blond hair.

Records in his burial file (from the National Archives) show that he died of pneumonia on January 28, 1919 at the base hospital in Archangel, Russia. He was buried in the Allied cemetery in Archangel on February 4, 1919.

Private Kulwicki's body was exhumed from the cemetery in Archangel on September 24, 1919. His body was returned to the US for burial.

His body arrived in Milwaukee on Monday November 17 and was received by John Martin of the Knights of Columbus (a Catholic fraternal organization). Burial was the next day at St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Milwaukee.



Andrew Kulwicki, 871 Thirteenth Avenue, Private, Infantry, 85th Division, died in Russia.

Photograph from *South Side's Part (Milwaukee) in the World War compiled by the Wisconsin News*. (Milwaukee, WI: The Wisconsin News, no date, no page numbers.) The moiré pattern (vertical lines) is caused by scanning a photo that was printed from a half-tone screen.

But the Friday, November 21, 1919 issue of the *Wisconsin News* (a William Randolph Hearst newspaper that was published in Milwaukee) has a page 1 story with a photograph of Private Kulwicki. The banner headline reads:

**EXHUME YANK HERE IN BURIAL MIXUP.** The article begins:

The body supposed to [be] that of Private Andrew J. Kulwicka [sic], Milwaukee's own soldier hero, who died with the United States forces in Siberia, will be disinterred Saturday to determine whether or not it really is he.

In a little [sic] home at 871 Thirteenth av. a gray-haired mother whose soldier son was killed in Russia is sick with anxiety, wondering whether the body for which funeral services were held on Tuesday was really that of her son or of some other soldier.

She is Mrs. Anna Kulwicka [sic], whose soldier son, Private Andrew J. Kulwicka, died in the wilds of Siberia, where he was sent with other American boys to fight the Bolsheviki. Stricken with disease, the boy died in a base hospital.

This photograph of Private Kulwicki appeared with the article:



The article states that the mother became concerned because of two recent mix-ups in burials – in Racine, Wisconsin and Grand Rapids, Michigan. In both cases, the soldier's body that was returned in the casket was not the soldier that the burial was supposed to be for.

The next day (Saturday, November 22, 1919) the *Wisconsin News* had another page 1 article, **MOTHER TO VIEW SOLDIER'S BODY TODAY**. The article states that Private Kulwicki's body was to be exhumed that day, and the mother allowed to make positive identification.

Apparently, there were no problems, because there were no more articles about this in the *Wisconsin News*.

Private Kulwicki's headstone is in Section Q, Block 6, Lot 31-s of St. Adalbert's cemetery. His famous descendant, Alan Kulwicki, is buried in a different section of the cemetery (Section 15, Block 1, Lot 2, Grave 2).

## **More about Alan Kulwicki**

Alan Kulwicki was born December 14, 1954 in Milwaukee and grew up in that area.

In the 1970s, he raced at local tracks in Wisconsin. He began NASCAR racing in the 1980s. In 1992 he won the prestigious Winston Cup Championship.

He and three others died on April 1, 1993 when their light plane crashed while on their way to a race in Tennessee.

There is a Milwaukee County park named after Alan Kulwicki. And this year, the Milwaukee County Historical Society had a special exhibit celebrating his life and career.