

In search of the Desert Fox

WWII legend leaves tough trail to follow

By PHILIP D. GIBBONS
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Herrlingen, Germany — As a student of 20th-century history, I have always been fascinated by the paradox of the prominent military career and curious death of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

Rommel, the famous Desert Fox of World War II's North African desert theater, was at one time one of Nazi Germa-

ny's most decorated military leaders and a personal favorite of Adolf Hitler. His daring military exploits and success earned him the adulation of his troops — and the grudging admiration of his opponents, including Winston Churchill.

But in preparing for a lengthy trip to Germany, I was unable to find out much about Herrlingen, the small German village where Rommel died and is buried. The Internet revealed scant more than a photo of his grave; guidebooks were surprisingly unproductive. My only clues came from several biographies.

Herrlingen is near the larger city of Ulm, about an hour from Munich. I

decided to take a day trip to see what remained of the legacy of the Desert Fox. At the very least, Ulm is the birthplace of Albert Einstein and the home of the world's largest church steeple, so it wouldn't be a total loss.

At the tourist information center in Ulm's main square, the young woman who greeted me in perfect English had trouble finding information, but a local preparing a free walking tour to Ulm's city center came to the rescue. He retrieved a brochure containing information on the nearby town of Blaustein, a

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Erwin Rommel earned fame with the Afrika Korps.

Rommel's Pour le Merite, Germany's equivalent of the Medal of Honor.



Rommel's Pour le Merite.