

Rommel's Schwabian dish:  
SPAETZLE MIT KALBSBRATEN  
(Roast veal with noodles)

Frau Lucia Maria ROMMEL actual map which Rommel had used in Africa framed on the wall. In the  
Stuttgart-Sillenbuch were several photographs of Rommel, some in color, some in black and  
Eduard-Steinle-Strasse 60.

Phone: 9 08 33

Here are notes of my interview with Frau Rommel and her son Manfred Rommel at their home outside of Stuttgart. The interview took place at 8:15 on the night of July 9th, 1958. Present was Mr. Panitza and a representative of the READER'S DIGEST, Stuttgart office. Mrs. Rommel greeted us in her living room which although slightly smaller is almost a replica of the room which the Field Marshal had <sup>his</sup> at home in Ulm, Herrlingen. We sat around a table which was covered with a heavy arabaic carpet or tapestry. Behind us on the wall was a long red, brown, blue and other colors in a type of tapestry or wall covering which in fact looked as thick as a carpet which had been presented to Rommel by his beloved Africa Corps and interwoven in the tapestry in Arabaic are the names of the principal towns which the Africa Corps captured in its advance across Africa in 1941. They include such names as Bizerte, Bengazi, Burna and so on. On one wall there were two portraits on either side of the doorway painted in Africa by an artist called Klausen. Leaning over near a window was a black Arabaic chair with delicate pearl inlay in the back of it and also a bullet hole. The chair was carried in Rommel's caravan and throughout the campaign and one night he was sitting in the chair when the camp was strafed and one of the bullets chipped the chair. To our left and behind us there was Rommel's actual desk which had been moved over from his home...his former home at Ulm. It is a heavy walnut desk and standing near it is a large desk lamp on a pedestal rising from the floor with a white parchment lampshade. Back of the desk was.. is same bookcase containing a vast collection of military books some of which he had written himself and various military treatises which he had collected over the years. By the desk was his own chair which he used thousands of times over the years. The one thing that was missing in the room was the small table which used to stand beside the desk on which there was the telephone. The room was richly carpeted and there was a divan bed or couch in one corner also carpeted. I noticed that all these carpets seemed to have an Arabaic flavor about them and apparently they were gifts or were purchased by Rommel during the African campaign. In the hall as one entered the house



by the way, there was the actual map which Rommel had used in Africa framed on the wall. In the living room itself there were countless photographs of Rommel, some in color, some in black and white, also <sup>photographs of</sup> good friends and a rather interesting photograph on the wall of General Mather's predecessor whose name at this moment I cannot remember but apparently he was a good friend of Rommel's because I see that it was a picture photographed by him. It was obvious from the moment the conversation began that Mrs. Rommel was quite nervous. She's a short woman, not exactly pretty, but with a strong face, a motherly face and I would say she's in her sixties <sup>wears</sup> now but at one time she must have been quite handsome. The son, tall, over six feet <sup>wears</sup> glasses, dark haired, quietly spoken and very intelligent.

Mrs. Rommel told us that her husband arrived at Ulm that night of June 4th at about 7 a.m. He was tense and worried. In conversations later that evening after he had greeted them and so forth, he told them that he didn't have the troops he wanted, he didn't have the supplies he wanted and the situation was not good.

For dinner that evening they had a special dish, Rommel's favorite. They had veal stew with noodles. This apparently is a favorite Swabian dish which Rommel loved very much. They also drank fruit juices because they never drank wine. Generally they drank blackberry or cherry fruit juices. Rommel was quite tired when he got home that night and he retired by about 10 p.m.

Besides Mrs. Rommel and their son in the house that evening there was one of Rommel's three dogs, Ajax. Ajax was quite excited when he saw his master come in and jumped around lively. A note here about Ajax. Of the three dogs which Rommel possessed at that time, one was a German hunting dog actually a German pointer and the other two were small dachshunds which had been given to Rommel as a present from a breeder in Berlin. The names of the two dachshunds were Ajax and Elbow. Elbow was back at Rommel's headquarters as was the German hunting dog. But Ajax had been sent home some time before because he proved himself to be a pretty rough little dog around headquarters. He used to terrorize Elbow for one thing. And also he liked to chew the boots of visitors to the headquarters besides the staff. He annoyed General Dausay the former chief of staff to Rommel quite a bit because every time he entered Field Marshal Rommel's room, Ajax would go for Dausay's shiny black boots. Indeed it was the same with everybody who



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entered Rommel's room at the headquarters. Finally, this got Rommel very annoyed and Ajax was sent home. Apparently, Ajax hated two things...three things, sabres, boots and staff cars. On one occasion Ajax was sitting under the sofa in a corner when Field Marshal Rommel had a visitor. The more they talked, the more nervous Ajax became. Finally, just as Ajax was about to go for the visitor's legs, Rommel grabbed him in his left and right hands by the head and tail and threw him bodily out of the room. He used to say "This is the only one who won't obey my orders."

Rommel was a good skier and in February of 1944 he made the great mistake of taking Ajax with him on the vacation. While he was skiing Ajax would run after him and go for the skis. Again and again Rommel regretted deeply having taken the dog with him.

That night, anyway, Rommel seemed quite depressed. He talked about his forthcoming conversations with Hitler. His wife who was going to go with him to Berchtesgarden and who knew very well what his problems were because in the past she had always been the sounding board for Rommel, despite what the histories have said. The truth seems to be that Rommel talked over most of his problems with his wife in a way which is not before been made public. She seems to have known all about his problems regarding supplies and reinforcements and there seems to have been a quiet understanding between Rommel and his wife regarding Hitler. It is a simple understanding. They both thought that Hitler was mad.

Mrs. Rommel also confirms that Field Marshal had never indicated anything about expecting the invasion in the early part of June. Both she and her son remembers that again and again Rommel had emphasized that when the assault finally came it would take place at the time of a full moon. They also agree that Rommel was hoping desperately that the invasion would be postponed long enough for him to get more mines planted on the beaches and behind the beaches and also to give them more time to set up beach obstacles.

She told us that Rommel had not made many friends throughout his life. That he did not make friends very easily but when he did make a friend, he remained constant and true to him.



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According to Mrs. Rommel, she said the Field Marshal always got up very early in the morning because "He had an idea that human beings think better first thing in the morning".

He used to get up at four or five and go for a long walk which lasted about an hour.

On the morning of the 5th he was up early, he went downstairs into his study and spent the remainder of the day there going over all sorts of plans and proposals which he proposed to put up to Hitler the following day. Its interesting that both the Rommels remember <sup>that</sup> he never actually wrote anything out but he was more interested in drawing pictures of it because he thought the pictorial representation would make his point much more clearer to the fueher and his staff.

Young Rommel was only fifteen at the time but he sat in on some of the conversations that day, and he remembers that his father talked about "The constant bombing of the railroads". Rommel said "You know we should use the French canals and rivers to move up our supplies and reinforcements. We could use specially built concrete boats which could <sup>be</sup> easily ~~be~~ camouflaged and they would move at night. This would give us an extra arm in our supply problem."

That night too they also talked about glass mines. They went to bed early and both the Rommels remember that the first call came in at a little before 5 a.m. This call the announcement that D-Day June 6, 1944 had begun came in at a time when Rommel was already up. He was wearing a dressing gown at the time. He went downstairs and picked up the phone. According to Mrs. Rommel, Speidel told him that an attack had been made but that he did not know whether it was "A dieppe type attack or whether it was the real invasion." Rommel said to him "Well find out and fast." Speidel also said to Rommel "I do not think you should leave right away Field Marshal but I think you should wait before making any decision until I ring you back". The decision, of course, he was referring to was whether Rommel should proceed to Hitler's headquarters to hold the conference or whether he should return immediately to the front. There is some confusion here and this matter is not reconciled because I believe that Rommel's conference was actually supposed to take place on June 7th not June 6th. However, it is

(F)  
Rommel, Lucie, Karl's  
Army Group



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possible that the date of June 6th was settled in a telephone call that day between Hitler's headquarters and Rommel.

After getting this call from Speidel which incidentally is not recalled...is not recorded in the official war diaries, Rommel went upstairs, dressed and then packed. His wife did not say anything to him. She does not remember having said anything to him. She does not even remember until much later that this matter was discussed but she saw that the call had upset the Field Marshal who was now quite tense and quite worried. Later that morning she learned what it was. It was a terrible blow she thought but she hoped that he'd be able to find some sort of solution and she also hoped that this would finally wake up the people at Hitler's headquarters to the seriousness of the situation.

Young Manfred Rommel remembers hearing his father discussing what had occurred but the importance of it did not seem to register with him too much. He was only fifteen years of age. He knew some sort of an attack had been made but he was not sure that what it was all about. He was...he did not know the full importance of the invasion at that time. At least, this is what he says. There was another person in the house and that was Frau Kirchherm the wife of a general who was staying with them. We hope to interview her and find out if she remembers anything.

Fully dressed and packed now Rommel began pacing up and down waiting for this call from Field Marshal...from General Speidel. It is in this time by the way that he telephoned according to Templehoff his operations officer.

The call finally came in at 10:15 from Speidel. At the completion of the call he said to his wife "The invasion has begun, I must return immediately."

They took their farewells behind the closed front door because Rommel always made it a point of never showing any emotion or making any demonstration of affection to his wife or son while other members of his staff were present. Daniel came up in the car and the moment they heard the car approaching Rommel kissed his wife and put his hand on

Rommel, Lucie Marie  
Kerstin  
Army Group



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his son's head and said "Well Manfred you and I will try and win the war". Manfred said "Goodbye Daddy". Then Rommel left the house, climbed into the car and drove away.

Here are some random notes that were made during the interview:

Rommel nearly always referred to Rundstedt in a very tactful manner. He had no particular love for him but he used to refer to him as "Just an old gentleman".

The house at Ulm was a larger...large...of three stories, set in a large garden with a frontage of garden roughly thirty yards running out in the lawn with a part way down the middle. The first floor of the house was or contained rather a dining room, Rommel's study, Mrs. Rommel's own living room and a solarium. The second floor, there was the Rommel's master bedroom, the son's room and his own study or living room. Also there were two baths in the house. The third floor had other bedrooms and a spare room.

The actual address <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ Ulm was 13 Wippinger Strasse.

~~Rommel's baton's~~ baton's name was Sergeant Guenther who was back at headquarters at the time. He did not know that the invasion had started. He'd heard some talk but He did not know the exact details of it.

Rommel had two Field Marshals batons one called the interim baton which I've seen and which is about two feet long with a silver mounted handle and on the side of the silver mounted...the silver workings on the handle there is inset two gold eagles. Around the bottom of the handle there is his name "Rommel". The baton itself is of black ebony just tapped off or topped off with the silver handle.

The second baton is a garish affair in gold with red velvet spattered along its length by black German crosses and the gold eagle holding the swastika in its claws. The whole thing is about one and a half feet long and I would say it weighed about three pounds. Its a very heavy affair. At one end of it it has an inscription from the Fuehrer to Field Marshal Rommel for the fight...to Field Marshal Rommel and then at the bottom the sentence



Rommel disliked this baton,<sup>and</sup> never even carried it. At no time can anybody remember him carrying it after it was presented to him but he always carried the interim baton which is much more simple and dignified looking affair. The size of the shoes by the way which Mrs. Rommel showed me and which had been resoled by the way, the size is 5 1/2 and it contains the following lettering. It says ~~5 1/2~~ D I 5 1/2 L whatever that means. The size anyway is 5 1/2. Mrs. Rommel remembers that his constant predilection throughout these months was the...the Russians. He felt again and again that what really should happen as he once put it to her was "The . . we should reach an understanding with the Allies and if they would supply my men I would continue on the fight alone against the Russians". This of course was the same line that all the Germans talking about around about that time, namely that all sides should gather and fight the Russians.

The Rommel interview was not very productive but there are a few points that can be used. There seems to be grave doubts in my mind that Rommel received a phone call at 5 a.m. on the morning of June 6th because it is not recorded anywhere in the official <sup>OB West</sup> ~~c. d. west~~ war diary. There's even a doubt in my mind that Rommel was naturally at his home. There is a possibility that Speidel was unable to get the Field Marshal and did not contact him until the time that is specified in the war diary which ~~was~~ was 10:15 on the morning of June 6 German time.

That's the end of the interview with Mrs. Rommel

(F. ... Manfred)



Rommel Letters. (EAP III-21-a-14/11)

Box 354, 1 Jan - 29 Jul 44, in

OCMH as MS X-211.

Excerpts from letters from Rommel to his wife and son Manfred.

12 Jan 44 -- ... Just think of it, I am expecting to get a wire-hair Dachshund puppy. It will be given to me by the OT (Organization Todt, T.), e. g. they will buy it for me. I should like to housebreak it here.

19 Jan 44 -- . . . I believe firmly that we will win the defensive battle in the west, if we still have some time to get ready.

Now Guenther will take off tomorrow morning with a handbag and will help you with the move. In 10 - 12 days he will return here. (Guenther was evidently the batman, T.) He has taken everything along that we -- more accurately Hammermann -- have been able to get here. When he returns he should bring me my brown civilian suit and the spring overcoat with hat etc. I am really looking forward to be able to go out sometime without the marshal's baton. . .

Guenther wants two days of leave for his wedding. Give him 300 Marks.

21 Jan 44 -- Since yesterday I am now the owner of dogs; the Organization Todt gave me not one but two Dachshunds. One is a male, one year old, long-haired with a real mustache, the other is only three months old. The latter was from the start very affectionate, while the older one is still sort of reserved. At night both of them howled from time to time. I guess they were homesick for their former owner. The older Dachshund would be just right as watch dog for our house. He reports well. The younger one I would like to keep here. . . I am anxious to hear from you about the move and how it went. I hope everything goes without a hitch.

(From  
Rommel to  
Lucie Maria and  
Manfred)  
Army Group



Rommel Letters -- 2 -

26 Jan 44 -- I just spoke to you on the telephone. Now the move seems to be pretty much over and you are in the new home, which I hope is in every way satisfactory. . .

My two muts (Ajax and Hector) had to be separated, because the older Ajax almost loved the young one to death. Ajax is now with me, and the other one with Boettcher.

3 Feb 44 -- . . . I bought myself a leather overcoat and a wollen one. Please be so kind and send a check for 350.50 Marks to the Verkaufsabteilung der Luftwaffe ( This was a sort of commissary where Luftwaffe officers could buy clothing articles. Seems Rommel got his leather coat there, T.) Berlin Postal Check account No. 169187, and 157.85 Marks to the Heereskleiderkasse ( Same thing for Army,T.) account No. 3522. Both coats are very nice and I hope I won't get any more "Hexenschuss" (a very descriptive term in German whose exact translation would be a witches shot and means neuralgic pains in back and shoulders,T).

6 Feb 44 -- Guenther has arrived safely here with everything. Thank you for your letter of 4 February. Now I know that the move went pretty well in general. Even if one does not see the sense of getting newly established in our grave times, one should still be grateful and happy that one has found such a beautiful new home. I will be so happy if I can spend a few days of leave in February with you. . .

My Dachshund is getting to be more and more affectionate. ~~if~~ When I take him along to the woods he is crazy with joy. He diverts from the grave worries that are with me day and night.

13 Feb 44 -- Here is a photograph of "Ajax." Perhaps I'll bring him along and leave him with you.

13 March 44 -- Gause brought everything -- also the baton -- I will need it soon for an official report. . . Our new (head) quarters are cold, but soon it will be spring.

(Fr  
Rommel  
in Lucia Werle's and  
Erwin  
Army Group)



27 Mar 44 -- Back for two days in my quarters. Lovely spring weather. My little dog is really coming along. He now reports when someone comes. The little fellow is so cute. I must often laugh over him. - Much work and trouble. Everything just doesn't work out the way one thinks and then one must force the issue and that means burning up extra energy...

30 Mar 44 -- How are we doing with our taxes? I guess we will have to pay taxes for Ajax too. How is the mutt doing? The little one is too cute for words and I believe he will be a good hunting dog. But I can't spend very much time with him. . . . Now March is nearing its end without the Anglo-Americans having started their attack. I believe they have lost confidence in their cause.

3 Apr 44 -- [General Gause, Chief of Staff of Rommel] will be replaced by Generalleutnant Dr. Speidel about the middle of the month. His brother was once with me in the machine gun company. . . P.S. Mittler & Son [Publishing house for military books] has sent a check for RM 3,575 Marks to my account at Wiener Neustadt.

6 Apr 44 -- . . . Here the tension is growing from day to day. It will probably be only weeks that separate us from the decisive events. . . My little Dachshund has grown a lot and is coming along nicely. He accompanies me -- when I'm at my quarters -- on my walks. . .

6 Apr 44 -- (To his son Manfred) . . . In a few weeks -- the favorable weather for landing and air operations starts in May -- we will be facing the decisive battle. We are moderately armed and are going into the battle with confidence. It will be tough, but we'll manage. . . My second Dachshund that is only half a year old, is coming along nicely and accompanies me occasionally on my hunting

(From  
Rommel to  
Lucia Maria and  
Manfred)  
Army Group



walks. . .

9 April -- Yesterday I was boar hunting. We shot four sows and one fox. The former will improve our rations.

10 April -- Today I went to see Rundstedt. Things have not turned out the way I had believed they would on 21 March.

[At a conference at Hitler's headquarters. Rommel had believed then that he had achieved his goal regarding the application of his defense strategy. This strategy, the defense on the beaches with armored reserves immediately behind the coastal sectors, was opposed to von Rundstedt's, who wanted to hold the armor back and throw it against the Allied bridgehead once it had been established. T.]

One does not want a cabinet crisis here and I have to give in. Nevertheless, I'm going to have my own way in the essentials. . . [The cabinet crisis was that Rundstedt told Hitler that he would quit if he did not get his way. As it turned out Hitler vacillated between the two strategic concepts and as things drifted into a compromise, neither concept could, in the end, be brought to pay off. T.]

16 Apr -- Speidel arrived yesterday. He makes a good and fresh impression. I believe it will work out well.

20 Apr -- Aldinger should bring Ajax along, I'll exchange him for a real hunting dog. The little one is too cute, but not quite house-broken. I'll send him to you later. Yesterday he tore my pants for joy. Or do you want him right away? (Letter was completed on 21 Apr, day after Hitler's birthday, T.)

26 Apr -- ( to Ma<sup>n</sup>fred) -- Just think, today I went riding the first time since 1939 ... ( to his wife, same day) . . . the thoroughbred would have been quite suitable for a seventy-year old clergyman, but there are others too. . .

(F)  
Rommel  
Lucia Maria and  
Erwin  
Ma<sup>n</sup>fred)  
Army Group



Still 26 April (to his wife) -- Last night the little one (dog) got away from Guenther (the orderly) and came to sleep with me. . .

4 // The (Allied) invasion preparations have now just about begun with large scale air attacks. The damage here at the front is still negligible, but at the same time this is a good thing because the troops can slowly get used to these concentrated attacks. In England morale is bad, one strike after another and the cries "down with Churchill and the jews" and peace are getting louder. These are bad omens for such a risky offensive. . . /

5 // 27 April -- Tomorrow I am going to take a more extended trip to the southwest and South (of France)." It appears now that the British and Americans are going to be so accommodating not to come in the immediate future. For our coastal defenses that is of extraordinary value, because we are getting stronger on the ground every day. The Air, however, is another matter. But that too will change in our favor. . . What is Ajax doing. My little one (dog) is so attached to me and loves sweets. He now sleeps in my room under the baggage rack. He will get his shots presently. . .

4 May -- Last night I came back from a long trip (the one to southern and southwestern France, T.) and called you right away. . . Too bad that Ajax is dead, but he was not so hot anyway. "Ebbo" as Guenther calls him, is too cute. You should have seen how happy he was when I came back. Of course he is still very playful and when he madly chases through the room trying to move forward but can't because he slips on the parquet floor, it just about kills me. . .

6 May -- Now I'm here at my headquarters for a few days to run things for a change. There is so much work. Today I have a very big conference. There are still no signs



6 May, continued --

There are still no ~~sure~~ signs of the British and Americans coming in the very near future. Every day, every week, is for us of invaluable importance. Every day we are getting stronger. My inventions are now being employed. I am looking forward to the battle with confidence. Perhaps on the 15th of May, perhaps at the end of the month.

8 May -- . . . Meantime the Organization Todt has sent me a young brown shorthair hunting dog that has got used to the new surroundings very well. He is obedient and attached to me. Ebbo at first was jealous. . . The two muts have caused me to climb the mountain four times. Maybe I'll send you Ebbo. He is a good watch dog. . .

I have not as yet received your shoe size (drawing). I hope Aldinger will bring it along, because I want to purchase the shoes for the 6th of June. (Now this must be Frau Rommel's birthday. Scored by T.).

. . . Today is a big reception at Rundstedt's. It appears to me more for propaganda reasons. In practice I have more or less made my point. . .

12 May -- Thanks for all the things you sent me, especially the cheese sticks. I'm already busily eating them up. The two muts have made friends. The little one is a scream. "Treff" (That is the name for the hunting dog, T.) got into a fight with a German shepherd yesterday. When I come the two of them are so enthusiastic and I can't get away unless I take them for a walk in the park. The little one will probably soon be with you in Herrlingen. . .

15 May -- . . . I can't take many more big trips now because one never knows when <sup>the invasion</sup> it will start (the invasion, T.). / I believe a few more weeks until things start popping here in the west.

(From  
Frau Lucia Maria  
Rommel, Erwin  
Army Group)



19 May -- Yesterday I returned from the west. Everything ~~EM~~ went well and according to plan. Two days ago I telephoned -- for the first time -- with the Fuehrer. He was in excellent humor and praised our work in the west. I hope I can get ahead (with my plans) faster than before. . .

I am curious whether I can spare a few days in June to get away from here. Right now there isn't a chance. . .

21 May -- (to Manfred) -- Many thanks for your letter, which Aldinger (I believe he was ~~Lt. Col.~~ <sup>Captain</sup> in the reserve and a friend of Rommels from World War I and also on his staff on that account, check with the Rommel Letters of L. Hart. T.)

21 May -- (to his wife) -- . . . Yesterday Rundstedt came here for a visit. In the afternoon I had a talk with a British officer who was quite sensible. . .

26 May -- Could you send me the ~~spare (T-shirt, T.) undershirts~~ ~~white with black edging~~ sports shirts -- white with black stripes, and without cuffs. One of them I had altered here by taking the collar off and am wearing it as my duty shirt (under the uniform jacket, T.).

24 May -- . . . Today Berndt (high official from the propaganda ministry) is coming in Dr. G(oebbels) mission. . .

29 May -- . . . No let-up in the Anglo-American marathon bombardment. The French are suffering most under it. Within 48 hours three thousand killed among the population. Our own losses are small. Many dummy positions have been ripped apart.

I am so glad that the little one (dog) pleases you so much. (It is evident that Rommel sent the dog to his wife, while keeping "Treff" for himself. "Treff" is a common German name for a hunting dog and means "Hit" in the sense of hitting the mark. T.) Treff is very quiet and obdient on a hunt.

(Erwin)  
Rommel  
in Lucia Maria  
Tel. Erwin  
Army Group  
(Treff)



29 May, continued --

I am very satisfied with the big brown hunting dog. Most of the time he lies next to me at the desk; when I get up he hopes to come along. On the hunt he heels and immediately reacts to a whistle. The other day he attacked a German shepherd so that it was difficult to separate the two mutts.

That's all for today. . .

(This is the last letter in this collection. The next one is written by Capt. Franz, written on 26 July, after Rommel's automobile accident. Franz was an aide who used to accompany Rommel on his trips. It says so in the letter. The letter also stated that Aldinger had the rank of Captain -- "Hauptmann". Correction for p. 7, letter of 21 May. T.)



Ro Ltr. 19 May  
2d paragraph

The weather is still cold - and finally rain. The British will have to be patient a little longer.<sup>1)</sup> I am anxious to get away from here, hoping to be able to take off for a few days in June. Right now this is out of the question.