

MEMMINGEN, GERMANY

day 62

Continuing south on the eastern bank of the Iller River, CC B and the 10th Armored Division were covering upwards of thirty miles per



Present day Memmingen

day in pursuit of the German army and the endeavour to capture as many cities as possible. In that period of history, moving an armor column thirty miles in one single day over mountainous terrain was difficult if not unheard of.

Twenty-six miles farther

south of Dietenheim lay the town of Memmingen a short distance from the banks of the Iler River. Along the route to Memmingen, hidden in the edge of the forest, were a number of German pillboxes capable of causing both casualty and delay to the armored divisions. But the German army was fragmented and in retreat. The pillboxes, if occupied at all, were undermanned. While they were a diversion to the U.S. armor, they were also fodder and nothing more than target practice for the well-coordinated and well-supplied Shermans. Each German pillbox, each German anti-tank gun, roadblock, and group of small arms resistors were blasted aside by the long column of tanks.

During the pursuit of the German army, the



German pillbox

Germans would typically and intentionally use many of the small villages as a place to return fire. The village building, civilian sympathizers, vehicles and unobstructed vantage points inherent to these small towns made desirable defense areas. Because of this practice by the German army, the 10th Armored Division developed a new counter strategy of its own. Prior to entering a town, the town Burgomaster would be summoned to visit the 10th Armored Division, and an ultimatum would be given. Surrender or be fired upon. Often this would result in the town rounding up and surrendering its own resisters to the 10th Armored Tigers.

Memmingen was one such town captured without a single shell being fired. On Thursday, April 26, Colonel Basil Thayer, commander of CC B, irritated by the delay of the surrender of the town, sent a message to the town officials stating, "My troops will march into town immediately. Display white flags. There will be no firing of any kind. If opposition is received, our tanks, artillery and bombers will destroy the town." Within an hour the town was entered by CC B with no resistance.

A German Lieutenant was captured shortly after Memmingen was occupied. He told Colonel Thayer that just prior to CC B entering the city, an SS General had stopped him, placed sixty rag-tag German soldiers under his command, and

instructed him to defend the city to the bitter end. He himself jumped into his staff car and sped away eastward in a cloud of dust in the opposite the direction of the entering 10th Armored Division.