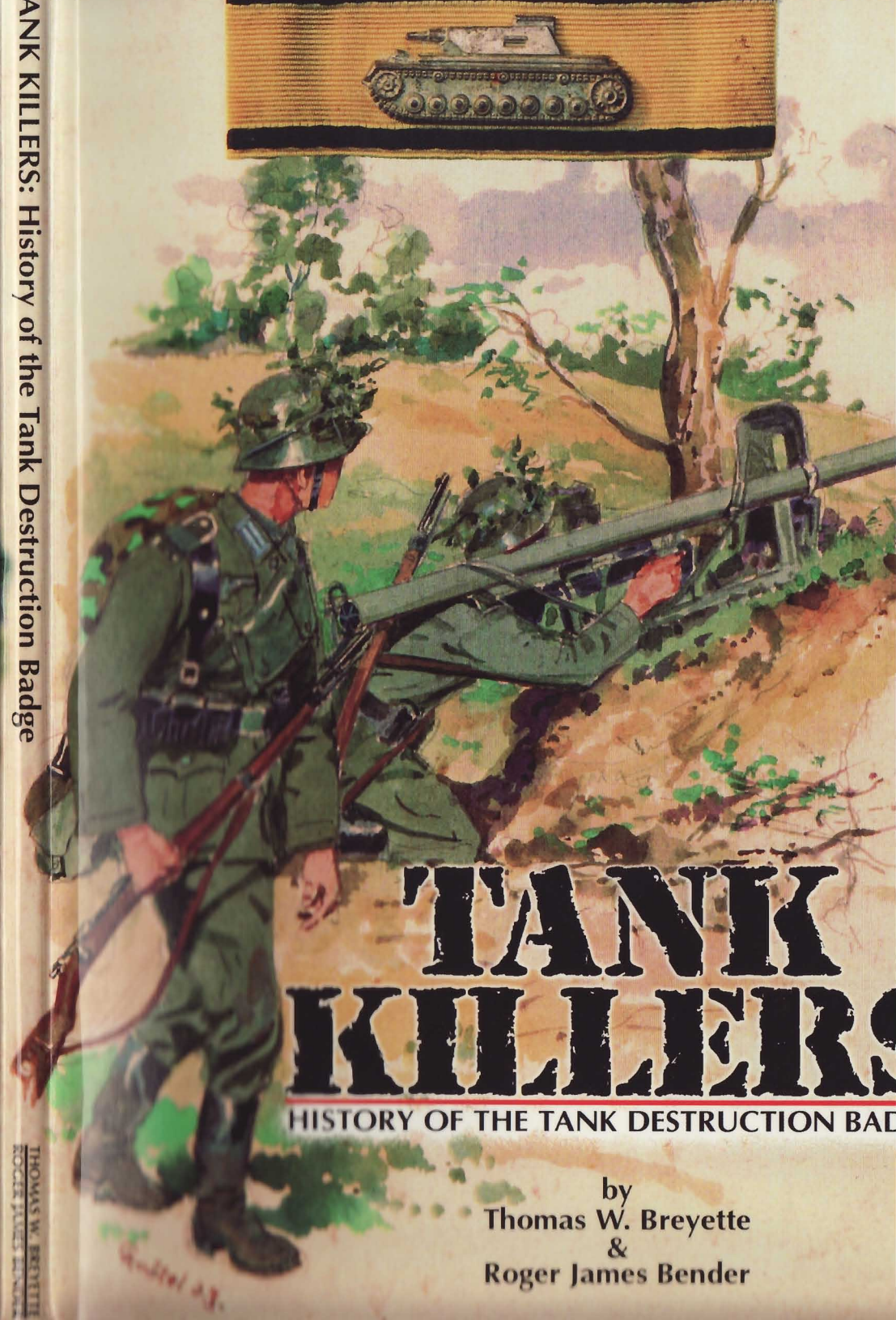




TANK KILLERS: History of the Tank Destruction Badge

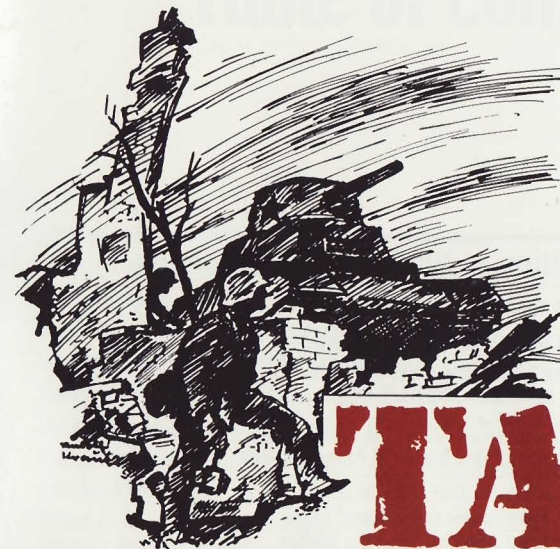
THOMAS W. BREYETTE
ROGER JAMES BENDER



TANK KILLERS

HISTORY OF THE TANK DESTRUCTION BADGE

by
Thomas W. Breyette
&
Roger James Bender



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1st Edition ~ 2000

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Table of Contents

Foreword by Bodo Spranz	4
Historical Background	6
Introduction/Acknowledgements	10
History of the Tank Destruction Badge.....	12
Variations of Issue Tank Destruction Badges	16
Embroidered Tank Destruction Badges	22
Field-Made Tank Destruction Badges.....	24
Fakes & Reproductions.....	26
Method of Wear	29
West German Ribbon Bars	33
Award Documents.....	36
<i>Soldbuch/Wehrpass</i> entries	43
Navy Awards and Documents	47
Hitler Youth Awards	50
Individual Histories.....	53
Weapons & Tactics	113
Bibliography	144

Foreword

While engaged in action against Soviet forces during World War II, the destruction of overwhelming enemy armor played an important part in the eastern campaign. Initially, the Soviets used mostly small, light tanks and the German infantry was not equipped with sufficient numbers of armor-piercing weapons. They, therefore, developed tactics to engage tanks using improvisations such as mines and hand grenades. This proved to be extremely dangerous and the individual had to know the tank's vulnerabilities and to keep out of view of the tank crew.

Later the Germans developed more sophisticated weapons such as the magnetic anti-tank charge (*Haftohlladung*) and the anti-tank grenade launcher (*Panzerfaust*). These weapons were so constructed that they concentrated the explosive power directly into the armor plating. Special grenades or shells

(*Hohlgranaten*) were also developed for the short-barrelled assault gun (*Sturmgeschütz*) which was not able to penetrate the armor of the excellent Soviet T34 and KW1 tanks. To correct this situation, the *Sturmgeschütz* was equipped with a long barrel with better penetrating power.

The author of this work has produced an excellent study of the Tank Destruction Badge and its requirements, all based on careful research and correspondence/interviews with holders of this decoration. Also, this commendable effort is well supported with many photos of recipients and the weaponry utilized in their single-handed combat engagements.

Hauptmann Bodo Spranz
Commander of a
Sturmgeschütz-Brigade



O. Spronk Photo Coll.

B. Spranz

This book is dedicated to the memory of Tom McGuirl of Brown University. As a dedicated historian he worked tirelessly on this book spending numerous hours editing and expanding its depth of coverage. Having been taken from us at much too early an age, Tom's true love of history, his guidance and his willingness to share his knowledge will be greatly missed.

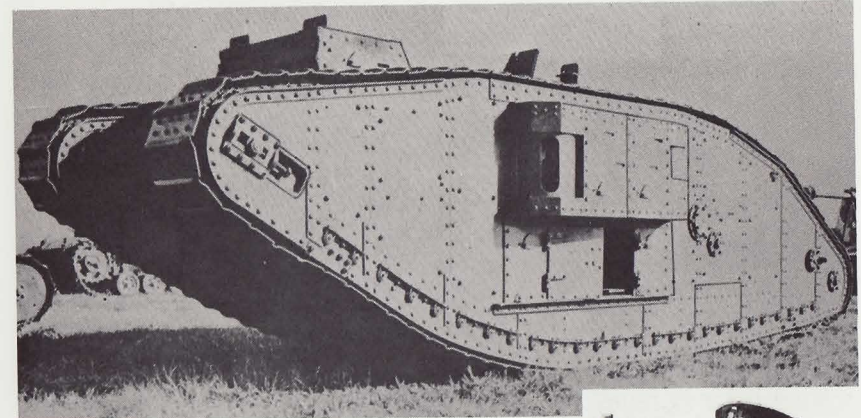
Historical Background

In an attempt to break the dead-lock on the Western Front in 1916, the British developed a new "secret weapon," the tank, and introduced it into combat at the Somme on September 15. The first forty-two tanks were thrown into a twelve-division attack. Although the tank crews had just arrived at the front and the vehicles were untried in war, they had a sensational effect as they could overcome barbed wire and machine guns. These rumbling monsters frightened the German infantrymen out of their trenches and put a slight bulge in the German line. In further engagements, however, it was discovered that tanks were vulnerable. The battle-torn terrain was normally unsuited for armor at the Third Battle of Ypres (July-November 1917) and the hulls of the Mark IV tanks were too thin to go against massed artillery.

A new age of warfare dawned on November 20, 1917 when the British attacked at Cambrai with 476 Mark IV tanks. The countryside southwest of the town was flat and firm and proved satisfactory for armored maneuvers. There was no preliminary bombardment and a smoke screen was laid down to conceal the oncoming tanks. The Germans were taken by surprise. Their frontal trenches were twelve feet wide and considered tank-proof, but the advancing machines carried frameworks on their noses which could be dropped in the trenchworks and used as roadways. The Germans fled in fear as the huge, armored machine gun firing machines poured a withering fire into the German trenches. When they had regrouped, they dug in to await the infantry attack which never came. Two German divisions had been shattered, with all of their guns captured as well as 4,000 prisoners. But by nightfall, 180 tanks were out of action, 65 were victims of enemy fire and the others through mechanical trouble or had been stranded and abandoned. The infantry's momentum was lost with these tanks out of action but the forward divisions held in place. At this time the Allies had failed to appreciate the impact of their new "secret weapon." Approximately 100 disabled tanks fell into German hands, and of these 30 were made operational again and constituted a portion of the German tank force in 1918.

After some hurried testing, the Germans found that by simply reversing the direction of the infantry rifle bullet with a heavy tungsten-carbide core in the cartridge case, it could penetrate the British tank armor. The British,

however, were also refining their tanks and soon newer Mark IVs and Vs with thicker armor reached the front. After the dust had settled, German logic held that the "tank fear" could be overcome with increased morale. The troops were instructed to retain their composure in the face of these new weapons and apply common sense while engaging these iron monsters. Appropriate defense positions and obstacles were to be constructed and an instruction sheet for combating tanks was distributed (see illustration on next page). A lack of laborers and building materials, however, hindered completion of proper defenses and the quality of properly equipped infantry gun batteries had diminished.



S. Fuller

The Mark IV above was an improved version of the earlier Mark I, II and III. Note that the instruction sheet on the next page illustrates a "Männlicher Tank" (Male Tank) and a "Weiblicher Tank" (Female Tank). The difference is that the Male Tank was armed with two 6-pounder naval guns and four machine guns, while the Female Tank was armed with only six .303 caliber Vickers machine guns. The crew consisted of a commander, driver, two gunners, two machine gunners, and two brakemen.

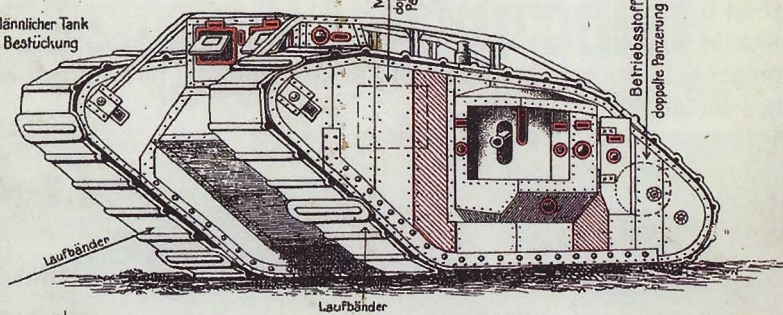


Major Stuart Wise, USA, holds a 13mm Mauser anti-tank rifle. It weighs 36 pounds and is 5'7" in length.

Merkblatt für Tankbekämpfung.

Herausgegeben v. Kdeur. d. Kraftfahrtruppen 2

Männlicher Tank
Artill. Bestückung



1. S.m.K. Munition:

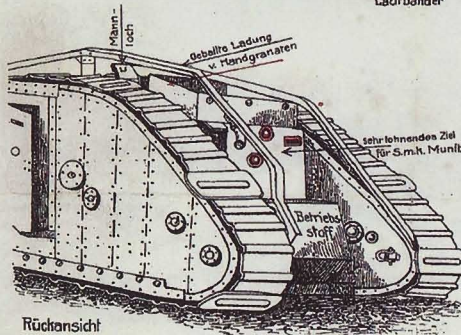
Muß senkrecht auftreffen, da Geschoss sonst abgelenkt. Auf Schlitze u. Schlöcher halten. Sehr lehrendes Ziel, Hinterseite, vom Schützen aus rechtes oberes Viertel.

2. Handgranaten.

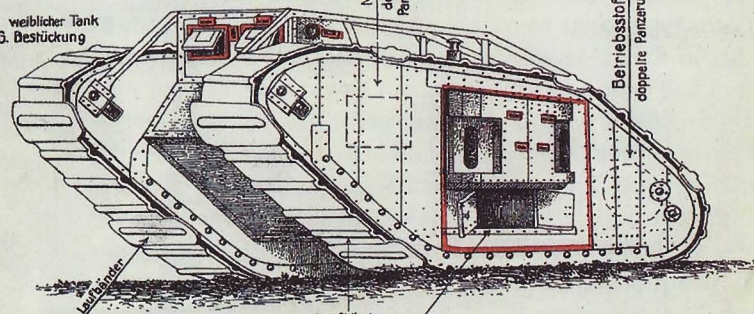
Einzelne Handgranaten wirkungslos. Geballte Ladung (3 Handgranaten Köpfe) auf das Dach werfen. Vernichtende Wirkung.

3. Leichter Minenwerfer u. Flachbahnschuß.

Ideales Tankbekämpfungsmittel, durchschlägt Panzerung und macht durch Laufbandzerstörung den Tank bewegungsunfähig.



weiblicher Tank
M.G. Bestückung



Sehschlitz

Sehloch verschließbar

bei weibl. Tanks
gute Geschöß-
wirkung für
S.m.K. Munition

rot bezeichnete Stellen
günstige Angriffspunkte
für Infanterie

Hergst. u. gedruckt v. d. Zentralstelle d. Vermessungs-Dienstes d. 2. Armee. 27.1.18

This instruction sheet for combating tanks is dated January 27, 1918. It states that rifle shots should be carefully aimed at observation slits and optics openings. Also, a single grenade will not be effective, but three grenade heads tied together and thrown on the roof will disable the vehicle. The light land mine is considered an ideal tank fighting weapon which will pierce armor-plating and knock off tank treads making it immobile.

The early tanks had proven to be mechanically unreliable and once immobilized became easy prey for German artillery and engineers armed with grenades and satchel charges. A disabled tank was one thing, but a moving, shooting one was another problem for infantrymen trapped in their trenches. Mauser Werke at Oberndorf took up the challenge and developed an over-sized rifle to shoot a larger and more powerful cartridge. The 13mm single-shot weapons did not reach the front until 1918. A single cartridge was manually inserted into the chamber, and when the tank was sighted, the range was estimated and the rear sight set. The gunner allowed for a lead time or tracked the vehicle by swiveling the big gun on a bipod, or waited for it to pass a pre-determined point. With a muzzle velocity of over 2,700 feet per second, this first anti-tank rifle could penetrate one inch of armor at 250 yards. A few magazine-fed Mauser anti-tank rifles were produced and a small number of them were used in combat at the battle of Hamel in July 1918, but the recoil proved difficult to manage.



New Zealand soldiers examine a captured German Mauser anti-tank rifle near Grevillers in August 1918.

The German Army was limited by the Treaty of Versailles to a mere 100,000 men. The Treaty terms also forbade the Germans from having modern weapons, including tanks, artillery and other heavy equipment. The army of the post-war period, the Reichswehr, was literally armless but was carefully trained with simulated tanks, anti-tank guns and other forbidden artillery mocked up in wood. The physical standards of the Reichswehr were among the toughest in the world and the war games were as realistic as possible. Having been stripped of all offensive weapons, the theme of the training was defensive. The lessons learned in World War I concerning anti-tank warfare were expanded upon and were to bear fruit in the upcoming world conflict. The concept and training of single-handed, anti-tank warfare had been carefully developed and as can be seen in the number of Tank Destruction Badges issued in World War II, the successes achieved against enemy armor were more than impressive.

Introduction/ Acknowledgements

The history of the Tank Destruction Badge has previously only been touched upon in books on German militaria. The research which went into the present study has been gathered over a period of several years and many visits with German recipients. Studying Tank Destruction Badges still in the hands of these recipients has been most valuable in identifying the variations of badges, learning to tell an original badge from a reproduction, and most of all being able to put this information to good use in the production of this book.

I have listed individuals who have assisted me in this work and wish to thank them for their time and efforts, and for opening their collections and personal files to me. This book would not have been possible without them.

Thanks go to my friend and publisher, Roger Bender, for listening to me say, "I've got an idea for a book," and "I should be done with it soon," for the last several years.

Institutions:

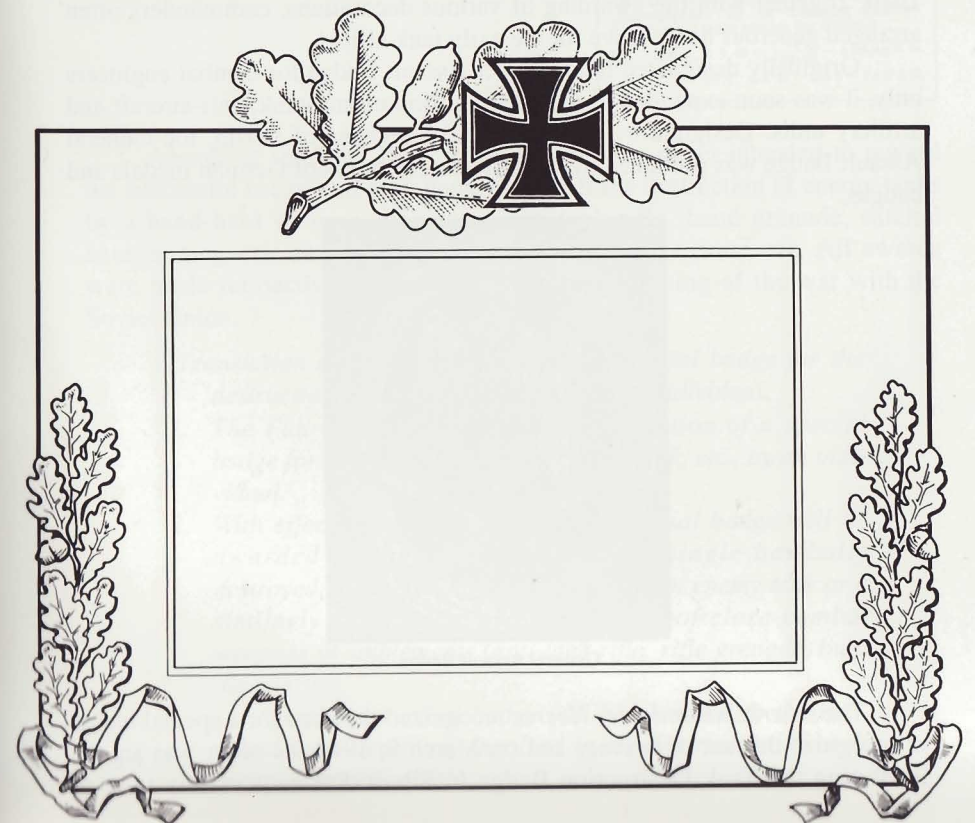
National Archives

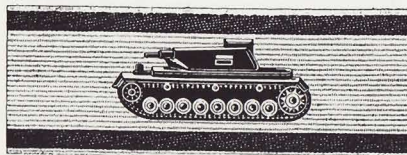
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Ken Lazier
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Jerome Murphy
Klaus Peters
George Petersen
Mike Pruett
Bob Queen
Eric Queen
Gerhard Rudloff
Jost W. Schneider
Bill Shea (The Ruptured Duck)
René Smeets
Bodo Spranz, Prof. Dr. (RKT m. Eich.)
Otto Spronk
Joe Stone
Kathy Thomas (Lasting Impressions Photography Studio)
Larry Thomas (Lasting Impressions Photography Studio)
U-Boot Archiv (Horst Bredow)
Gordon Williamson
Stephen D. Wolfe
Ray Zyla (Mohawk Arms, Inc.)

**All photos unless otherwise stated are from the author's collection.
+Contributors deceased prior to publication.*





History of the Tank Destruction Badge

Soon after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 it became evident that German Army divisions had insufficient numbers of anti-tank guns to stop the ever-increasing numbers of Soviet tanks. The job of tank fighting was falling more and more on the individual soldier, and acts of single-handed destruction of enemy armored vehicles were rewarded with the presentation of the General Assault Badge, instituted by the OKH on June 1, 1940. Together with the awarding of various decorations, commanders often arranged generous home leave for the early tank killers.

Originally designated the Engineer Assault Badge for combat engineers only, it was soon expanded to include members of anti-tank, anti-aircraft and artillery units. Designed by Wilhelm Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin, the General Assault Badge was produced by several manufacturers of German medals and badges.



General Assault Badge.

The Oberkommando des Heeres recognized the need for a special badge to recognize this act of bravery and on March 9, 1942 the order was signed instituting the Tank Destruction Badge in Silver. For each enemy tank or

armored fighting vehicle destroyed, one silver Tank Destruction Badge was awarded. As the war intensified, multiple awards of the Tank Destruction Badge became common. The OKH thus ordered that a higher grade be instituted. As of December 18, 1943 the Tank Destruction Badge in Gold was to be awarded for each fifth victory.



Top: Illustration from a period publication announcing the introduction of the Tank Destruction Badge.

Right: Copy of the original order outlining award criteria.

Sonderabzeichen
für das Niederkämpfen von Panzerkampfwagen usw. durch Einzelkämpfer

29. März 1942 Nr. 151

1. Der Führer hat die Einführung eines Sonderabzeichens für das Niederkämpfen von Panzerkampfwagen usw. durch Einzelkämpfer genehmigt.

2. Das Sonderabzeichen wird an Soldaten verliehen, die ab 22. 6. 1941 als Einzelkämpfer mit Nahkampfmitteln oder Nahkampfmitteln (Panzerbüchse, Granate, geballte Ladung usw.) einen feindlichen Panzerkampfwagen oder ein sonstiges feindliches gepanzertes Fahrzeug im Nahkampf vernichtet oder außer Gefecht gesetzt haben.

Für jeden vernichteten Panzerkampfwagen wird an den oder die entscheidend beteiligten Einzelkämpfer je ein Sonderabzeichen verliehen.

3. Das Abzeichen besteht aus einem Band aus Aluminiumgeflecht von 30 mm Länge und 32 mm Breite mit zwei eingewirkten schwarzen Streifen (3 mm breit), auf dem die aus Blech gehaltene Silhouette eines Panzerkampfwagens in Schwarz angebracht ist.

4. Der Armelstreifen wird am rechten Oberarmel der Feldbluse getragen. Bei erneuter Verleihung wird ein weiterer Armelstreifen angelegt.

5. Das Sonderabzeichen wird durch den Befehl- u. a. Kommandeur auf schriftlichen Vorschlag des Einzelkämpfers durch Befehl- u. a. Befehl verliehen.

6. Tag der Verleihung ist in die Personalpapiere einzutragen. Beglaubigte Abschrift des Befehls u. a. Befehls ist dem Verleihenden auszuhandigen¹⁾.

7. Die Abzeichen sind über die Division usw. bei den H.A. zu anfordern²⁾.

8. Die Bestimmung über die Verleihung von „Sturmabzeichen für die Gefechtsführung feindlicher Kampfwagen“ behält daneben ihre Gültigkeit.

29a

OKH., 9. 3. 42 — 1900/42 — AHA/Ag/H 1a

OKH., 4. 2. 43 — 29e 4 — PA/P 5 (f)

Awards of the Tank Destruction Badge were never intended to reward the successful use of anti-tank guns, but rather the destruction of enemy tanks by a hand-held weapon such as an anti-tank rifle, hand grenade, satchel charge, magnetic shape charge, and later the *Panzerfaust*, etc. All awards were made retroactive to June 22, 1941, the beginning of the war with the Soviet Union.

(Translation of above announcement): Special badge for the destruction of an enemy tank etc., by an individual.

1. The Führer has permitted the introduction of a special badge for the destruction of an enemy tank, etc., by an individual.
2. With effect from 22 June 1941 the special badge will be awarded to qualified soldiers who single-handedly destroyed or otherwise put out of action an enemy tank or a similarly armored vehicle by the use of close-combat weapons or implements (anti-tank rifle, rifle grenade, bundle charge).

A tank-destruction badge will be awarded to the individual most decisively involved in the destruction of each enemy armored vehicle.

3. The badge consists of an aluminum corded cloth band 90mm in length and 32mm in width, edged with two 3mm high black woven thread stripes, to the center of which is attached the stamped metal silhouette of a tank.
4. The sleeve-band (ribbon) will be worn on the upper right sleeve of the field blouse, additional awards of the badge will be recognized by badges worn in the same manner.
5. The Tank Destruction Badge will be awarded by the battalion commander in battalion orders upon receipt of a written recommendation of the individual's unit commander.
6. The date of the award is to be entered in the soldier's personal papers. The recipient is to be provided with a copy of the relevant battalion general orders.
7. Badges can be requested through divisional channels to army headquarters.
8. The criteria for awarding of the (general) assault badge for the destruction of enemy tanks remains in force.

The Tank Destruction Badge could be awarded to any person regardless of rank or branch of service. One notable recipient of high rank is *Generalleutnant* Ernst-Günther Baade, KC with Oakleaves and Swords, who was awarded a Tank Destruction Badge while an *Oberst. SS-Brigadeführer* Heinz Harmel, KC with Oakleaves and Swords, as well as *SS-Standartenführer* Jochen Peiper, also a recipient of the KC with Oakleaves and Swords, were each awarded one Tank Destruction Badge.

Numerous awards of the Tank Destruction Badge went to members of the *Luftwaffe's* parachute and field divisions. There are also documented cases of awards being made to naval personnel who found themselves without ships at the end of the war and hastily deployed as infantry. Many awards of the Tank Destruction Badge were made to members of the Hitler Youth who found themselves thrown into the hopeless defense of Germany at the end of the war, as well as to men of *Volkssturm* units, who fought in the final desperate battles. These examples show that single-handed tank hunting knew no age or rank distinction.

There are no true figures as to how many Tank Destruction Badges were awarded between 1942 and 1945, however, an estimate of 10,000 was published as the number of awards made from 1942 through mid-1944. When one considers that the Soviets lost several thousand tanks in the Battle of Berlin alone, this estimate is not even close to the final total.

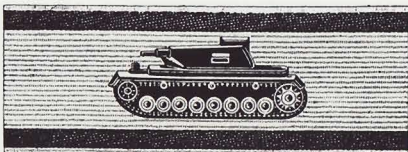
Also unavailable is the number of Tank Destruction Badges in Gold awarded, even though it was considered a very prestigious award. When taking into consideration that even the number of "Knight's Crosses" awarded has never been finally determined, this comes as no great surprise. In a conversation with the author in 1974, the late *SS-Standartenführer* Otto Skorzeny recalled that he made numerous awards of the Tank Destruction Badge to men under his command on the Oder Front in February, 1945.



Above and below: Otto Skorzeny presents the Tank Destruction Badge en mass to soldiers under his command at Schwedt on the Oder Front, February 1945.

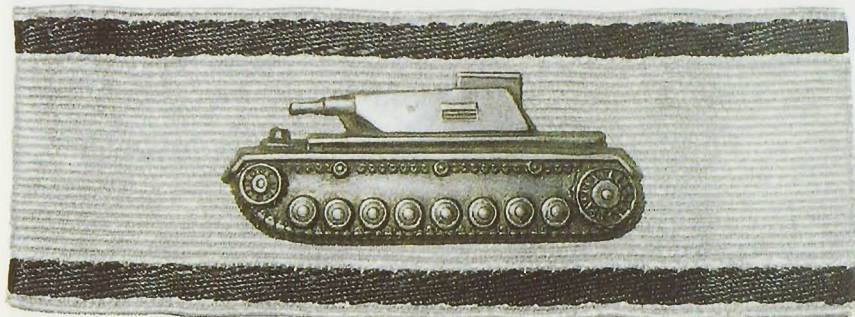


The award of the Tank Destruction Badge was to be accompanied by an award certificate and an entry in the individual's *Soldbuch* (Pay Book). However, this was not always the case with some recipients receiving only one or the other. Conversely, some awardees were recipients on paper only because no badges were available. Conditions at the front, availability of documents and badges, and of course the total collapse in the last months of the war all contributed to whether or not the regulations could be followed.



Variations of Issue Tank Destruction Badges

The Tank Destruction Badge in Silver was constructed of a silver-colored, stiff-corded cloth band measuring 31mm to 33mm high by 88mm to 90mm long. In the center of the band was a silhouette of a stylized German *Panzer IV* tank. The tank measured 18mm high by 43mm long and was secured to the band by three prongs, some of which are squared off at the ends and some that are cut at an angle, which attached to a back plate measuring 21mm high by 54mm long. The color of the tank varied from bronze, steel-grey to light black. Both the tank and the back plate were made of magnetic sheet metal. A 3mm high black woven thread stripe ran parallel at the top and the bottom of the band.



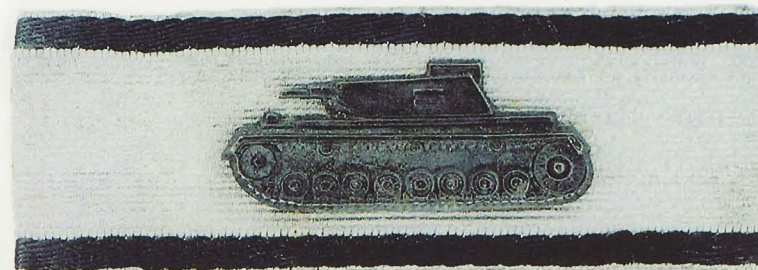
Tank Destruction Badge in Silver.

The Tank Destruction Badge in Gold was identical to that of the silver except the color of the band was gold and the tank was silver.

No manufacturer's marks, tags, or labels are found on the Tank Destruction Badge, and other than minor differences in length and height, only the backing material and color will differ from example to example.

Original backings have been observed made from the following materials:

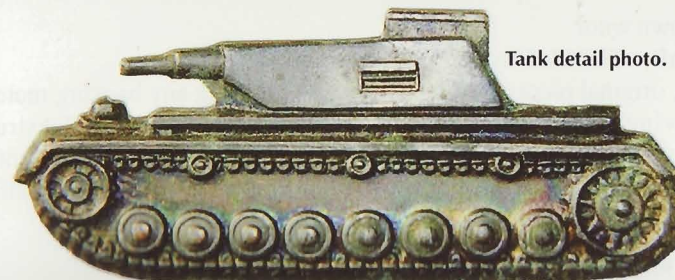
1. Olive-green canvas type material
2. Blue wool (dark blue)
3. "Army" green wool



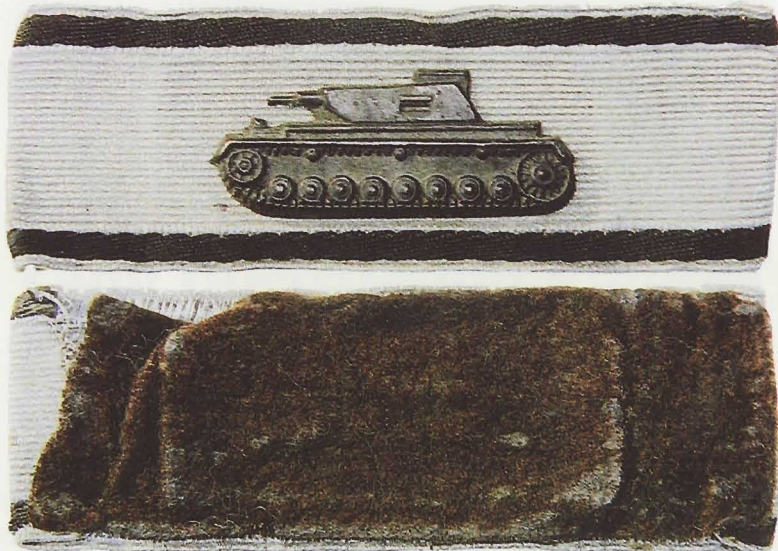
TDB in Silver with canvas type backing.



TDB in Silver with dark blue wool backing.

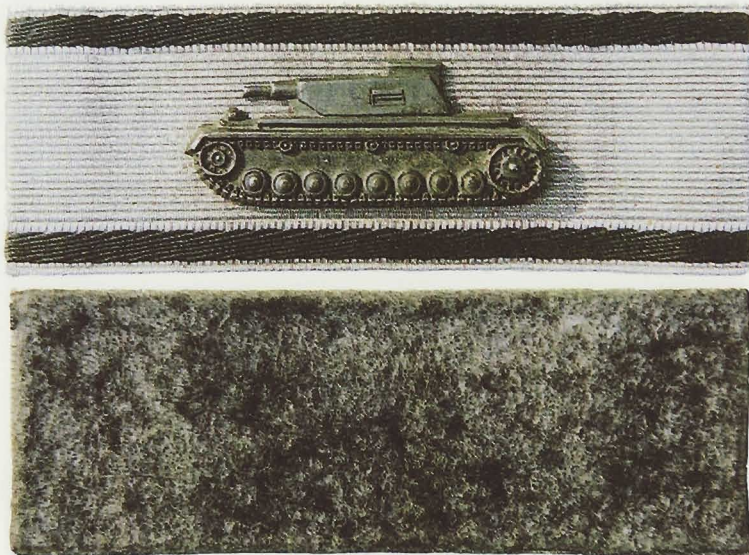


Tank detail photo.



Wolfe-Hardin

TDB in Silver with brown wool backing.



Wolfe-Hardin

TDB in Silver with *Luftwaffe* blue wool backing.

4. Brown wool
5. "Luftwaffe" blue wool

Also, original pieces have been observed lacking any backing material. The following photos show several officially awarded Tank Destruction Badges. The variety of backing material, color and the slightly different location of tank placement on the band can be attributed to different manufacturers and possibly when a badge was produced during the war.



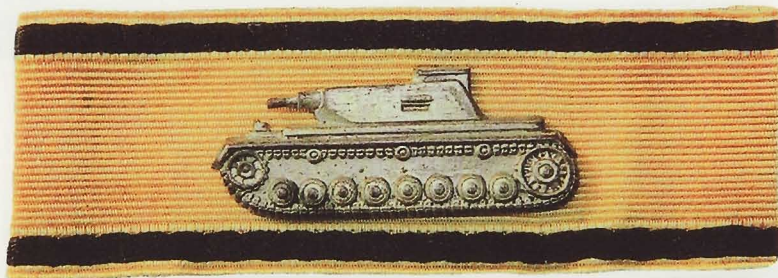
TDB in Gold with dark blue wool backing. The tank is tarnished silver.



TDB in Gold with Army green wool backing. The tank is tarnished silver.



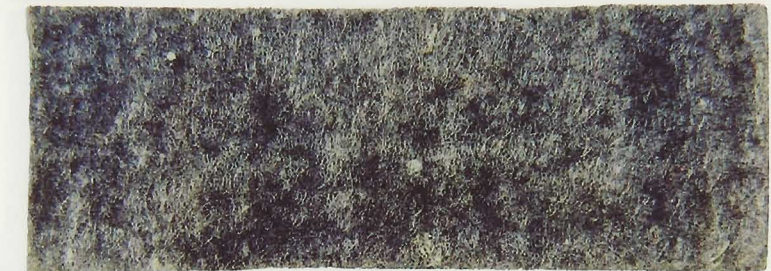
Silver tank detail photo.



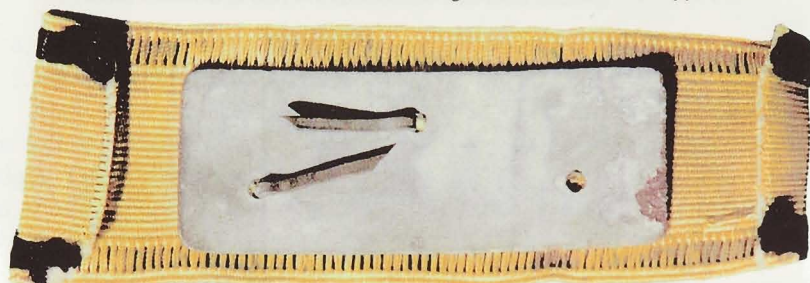
Wolfe-Hardin



Wolfe-Hardin

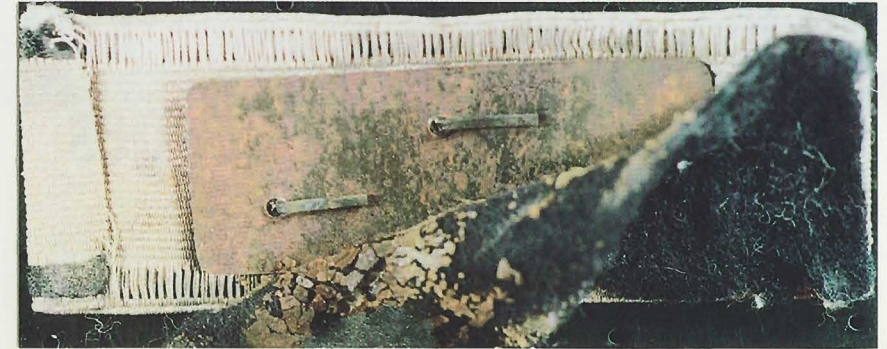


TDB in Gold with *Luftwaffe* blue wool backing. The tank has a blued appearance.

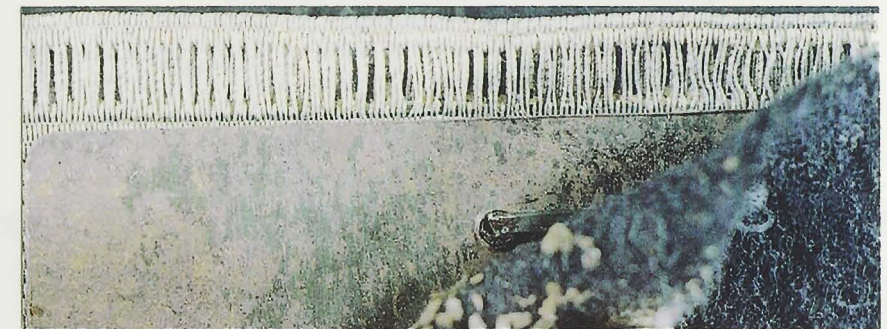


TDB in Gold without backing showing the backplate and that one prong is missing.

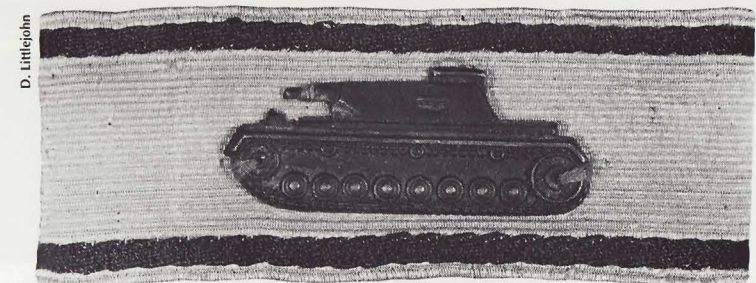
The photos showing the backplate and prongs are excellent examples of what to look for if the cloth backing material is not glued solidly to the badge. When checking a badge for its magnetic qualities, a magnet will easily hold to the back plate even through the backing material, and of course the tank as well.



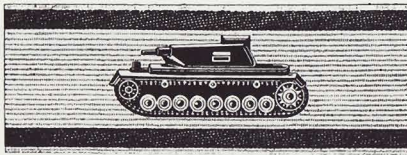
The backplate is shown with prong hole positions.



Note the unique weave on the reverse of the black horizontal woven strip on the obverse.



This TDB in Silver has a sewn-on, blackened tank. The three attachment points are at the center of the two main bodie wheels and the barrel.



Embroidered Tank Destruction Badges

A unique original variation of the Tank Destruction Badge in Silver has been observed which is made of the same basic stiff cloth normally encountered, but is much longer and the tank is embroidered directly onto the band. Whether these were officially awarded pieces or privately purchased by the recipient from a tailor shop or "open" store is not known. The author welcomes any further information as to the history of these variations. The photos show two existing examples and are the only ones that this author has been able to examine.

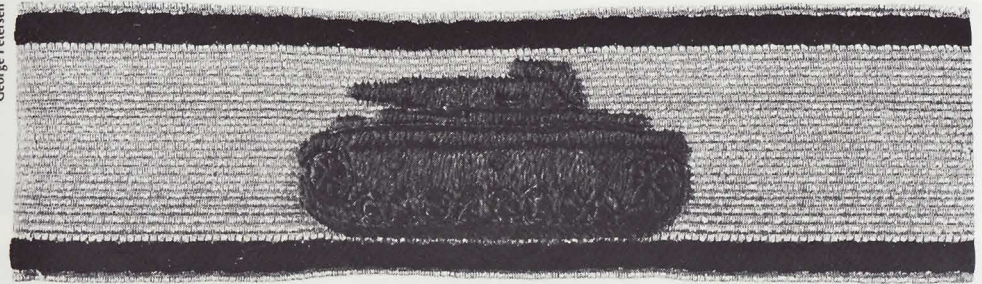


Embroidered TDB in Silver. It is unusually long and has a dark blue wool backing.

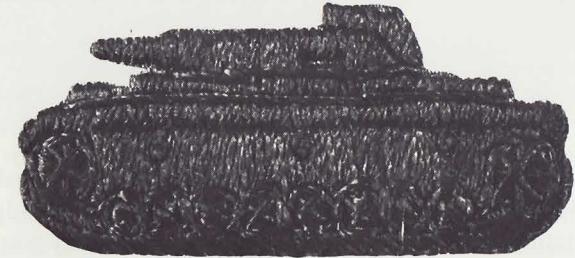
The tank on the above badge is embroidered in medium brown thread.



George Petersen



Another example of an embroidered TDB in Silver, but on a normal length backing.



Detail photo of the above embroidered tank, which is in a light brown thread.



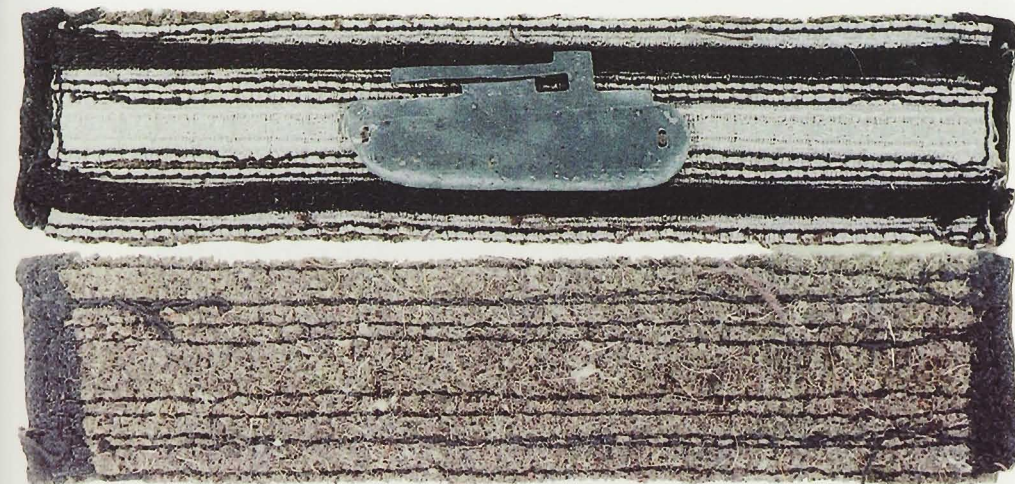
Field-Made Tank Destruction Badges

Field-made Tank Destruction Badges are a variant which is also sometimes encountered. They resemble true Tank Destruction Badges and were made of materials available to the soldier at the front. They were “hand” produced because of the shortage of original badges, and probably were replaced when supplies and time permitted.

As can be seen in the accompanying photo, this field-made example has been made out of NCO braid and shoulder strap material. This badge can be seen at the bottom of the three on the sleeve of this unknown recipient. A close inspection of the three examples shown indicate considerable effort went into constructing them, probably a task taken on by the company tailor.

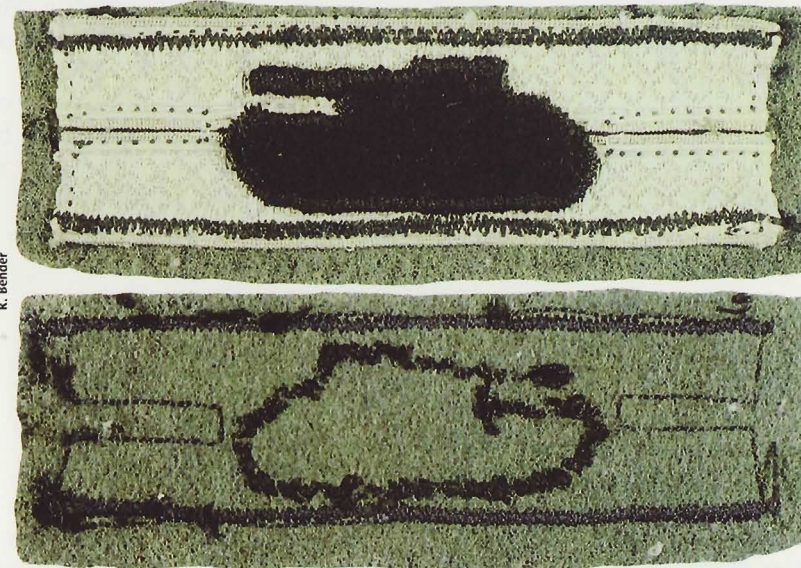


This unidentified Knight's Cross recipient wears three Tank Destruction Badges in Silver on his right sleeve. The bottom one is field-made and is illustrated on the next page.



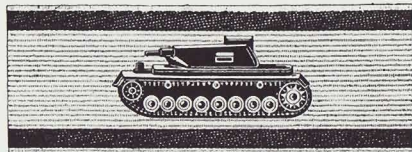
This field-made TDB is constructed of shoulder strap material and NCO braid. The tank is constructed of cut-out sheet metal.

All field-made badges encountered will be different from one another in construction, as is the one in the author's collection. Its basic design and construction is similar to the other two, but the tank is hand-made from a piece of scrap metal while the others consist of a piece of cloth in the shape of a tank stitched to the band.



R. Bender

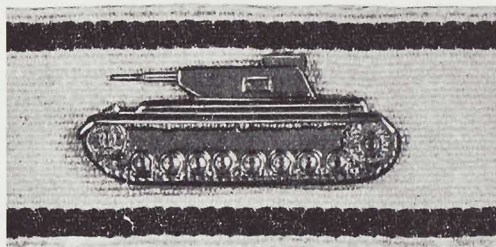
Above and right: Two slightly different field-made versions utilizing a piece of cloth cut in the shape of a tank.



Fakes & Reproductions

As with most all German medals and badges, reproductions of the Tank Destruction Badge have been available for many years. There are several common characteristics of fakes, the most obvious ones being incorrect dimensions of the tank and band, non-magnetic tank and backplate, and incorrect number of prongs. Also, the material used for the band and cloth backing may be of an inferior material. Recognizing the appearance of the tank profile will also help when trying to determine whether the piece is authentic. The barrel length of the tank gun on many post-war copies is much longer and more needle-like than on original badges.

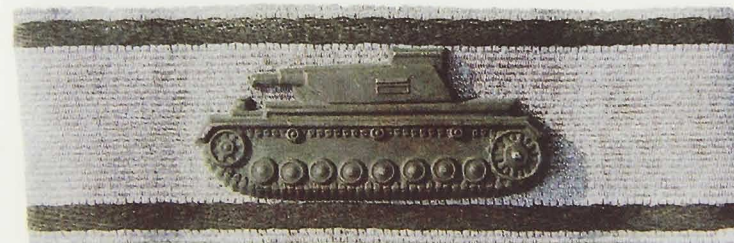
An original order published by the West German Defense Ministry on July 26, 1957, reinstituted de-nazified WWII medals and badges for wear by recipients serving in the West German military. An example of this type of badge with the long needle-like barrel is shown in the order.



The official West German version with long, needle-like barrel.

As can be seen in the accompanying photo, the Austrian-made reproduction is a very good copy. These began to flood military shows in the mid-1970's. They are well-made, but have two very distinct errors: (1) The tank backplate and prongs are not magnetic; (2) The color of the silver-corded band is *too* silver and, when compared to an original, stands out. Also, the backing material which has been observed by this author is either *Luftwaffe* blue or army field-grey. Of all original Tank Destruction Badges observed by this author, none of the above-mentioned points exist. In fact, many Tank Destruction Badges found in collections today can be attributed to either

“official” post-war copies made as replacement pieces for recipients, or just plain fakes.

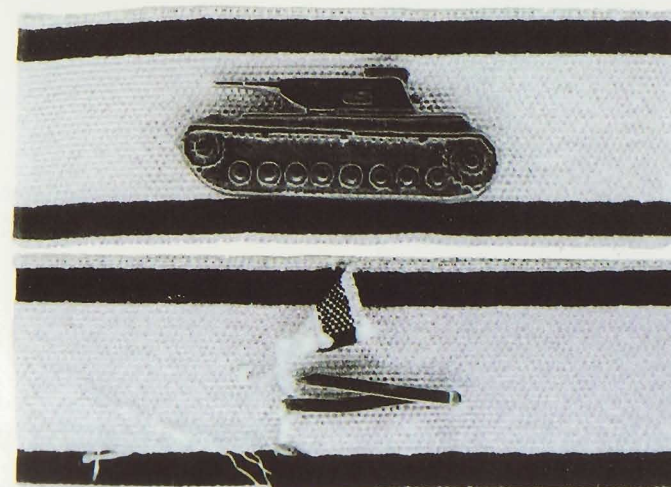


An Austrian-made copy.



Bob Decker

This copy has a black-painted tank with a long gun barrel and the two attachment prongs.

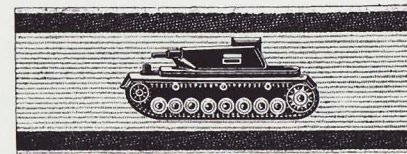


Bob Decker

The same observations as above may be made of this silver badge.



This Tank Destruction Badge in Gold is of the same basic construction as the previous two badges. What makes this a more obvious copy is that the tank is gold instead of the proper silver color.



Method of Wear

Upon presentation, the badge was either pinned to the sleeve of the tunic, or in many cases, simply handed to the recipient. The Tank Destruction Badge was worn one above the other, and grouped on the upper right sleeve of the tunic, but was not authorized for wear on the greatcoat. If an individual knocked out four tanks, four silver badges would be worn, one for each kill. After reaching the fifth kill, the four silver badges would be exchanged for one gold badge, and would be worn alone. Each additional kill after five would be indicated by an award of a silver badge until the tenth victory, at which time a second gold badge would be awarded.

As with all armies, disregard for, or misinterpretation of, regulations occurred. In one photo, *SS-Unterführeranwärter* Ehm not only wears his Tank Destruction Badge in the wrong position but also on the wrong sleeve of his



SS-Unterführeranwärter (NCO Candidate) Ehm wrongly wears his Tank Destruction Badge directly above his "Deutschland" cuffband.

Ewald Ehm, now an *SS-Unterscharführer*, wears two Tank Destruction Badges at the right location on his right sleeve.



This black Panzer jacket shows the proper positioning of rank insignia and decorations, including three Tank Destruction Badges.

Wolfe-Hardin

tunic! A second photo taken of him at a later date, shows that he had corrected this.



Feldwebel Johann Schwerdfeger.

Another example of this practice can also be clearly seen in the photo of *Feldwebel* Johann Schwerdfeger above. He is shown wearing his two Tank Destruction Badges in the correct position but on his left instead of his right sleeve. Some badges were crudely affixed to the sleeve by hand while under field conditions, and others were professionally applied by a tailor, such as in the case of Knight's Cross holder *Oblt.* Gerhard Konopka, who was awarded four Tank Destruction Badges. His badges were mounted on a piece of stiff cardboard which was covered with uniform material and then secured to the sleeve by means of four snaps, one in each corner.

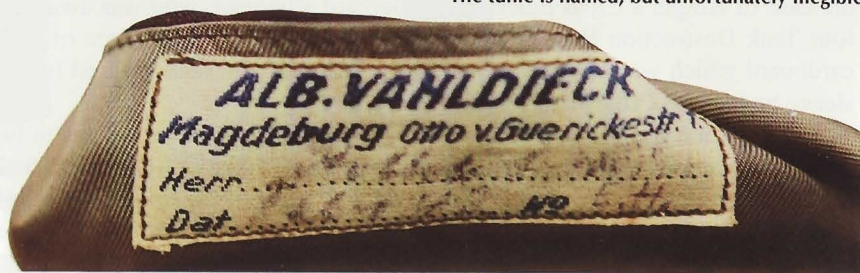
A practice which was common was for five or more silver badges to be worn by a recipient instead of one gold badge. In several of the individual case histories, the photos clearly show this was the case. When the question was put to Walter Voigt in 1996, he answered "We were at the front!, There was no time to look good for parades."



The cloth backing is visible on this photo of the top TDB.



This unique tunic of a Panzerjäger Leutnant has eight Tank Destruction Badges in Silver mounted on a cloth backing which in turn is mounted on the right sleeve. The tunic is named, but unfortunately illegible.



West German Ribbon Bars

In 1956 the newly-created West German military found its ranks filled by many veterans of World War II. On July 26, 1957, a new order was issued allowing these veterans to again wear awards and decorations earned while serving during World War II. Because most medals and badges of that period bore the national eagle and swastika, the new version had to be redesigned or "de-nazified." Most medals and badges kept their same basic design less the Third Reich symbols. Recipients of the Tank Destruction Badge were not faced with this, however, as the Tank Destruction Badge bore no swastika.

It was permitted to wear the full-size arm badge on the dress uniform only. The newly-produced Tank Destruction Badges were the same in general appearance only, and lacked the quality of pre-1945 pieces. Many have been passed off as original wartime badges for years.

J. Lukens



Hauptmann d. R. d. BW Friedrich Anding wears Tank Destruction Badges in Gold and Silver on his ribbon bar.

The most common method of wear was as a ribbon above the left breast pocket on a mount which also held all other wartime and current awards in miniature. This ribbon bar could be worn on all uniforms. This method can be seen in the photo which shows Friedrich Anding in the uniform of a *Hauptmann* in the West German Army. He wears the Tank Destruction Badge in Gold, which is a gold-colored ribbon with a silver tank on it, and a Tank Destruction Badge in silver, which is a silver-colored ribbon with a bronze tank on it. One major difference in this new method of wear is that the two black horizontal stripes on the top and bottom of a full-size arm badge are now vertical black stripes at each end of the ribbon. Shown below is a close-up of a complete set of ribbons belonging to Knight's Cross holder Will Fey. Two gold and two silver indicate a total of twelve wartime tank kills.



Willi Fey's West German ribbon bar.

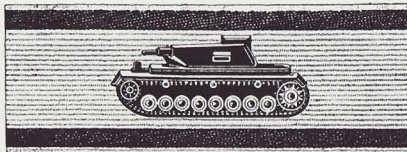


Another West German ribbon bar with the Tank Destruction Badge and numerous other combat awards.

O. Sprunk

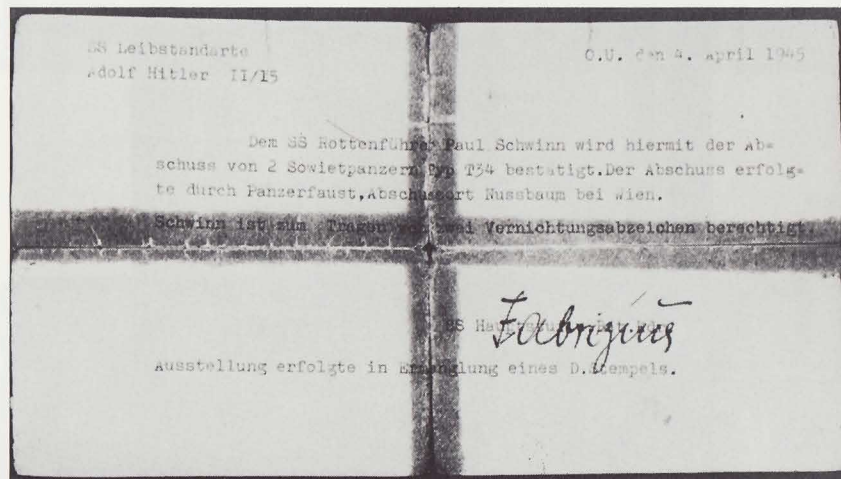


These two medals were located in a German medal manufacturer's shop in the 1950s and may have been prototypes for postwar wear. They, of course, depict the Tank Destruction Badge and the Badge for Shooting Down Low-Flying Aircraft. The medals are silver with a gilt tank and aircraft. The ribbons are golden-yellow with embroidered black edge stripes.



Award Documents

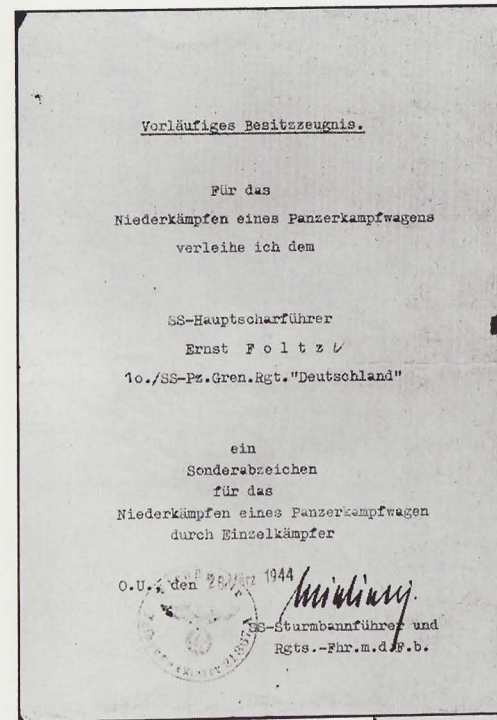
As in the case of many German medals and badges, original award documents and certificates for the Tank Destruction Badge are very rare, and are encountered less frequently than the badges themselves. Most were simply typed on either a half or full sheet of paper at the regimental or divisional headquarters and signed by either the commander or an adjutant. This type was referred to as a *Besitzzeugnis* or Possession Certificate. In the text of these can be found retroactive multiple or single awards. The format will vary from example to example.



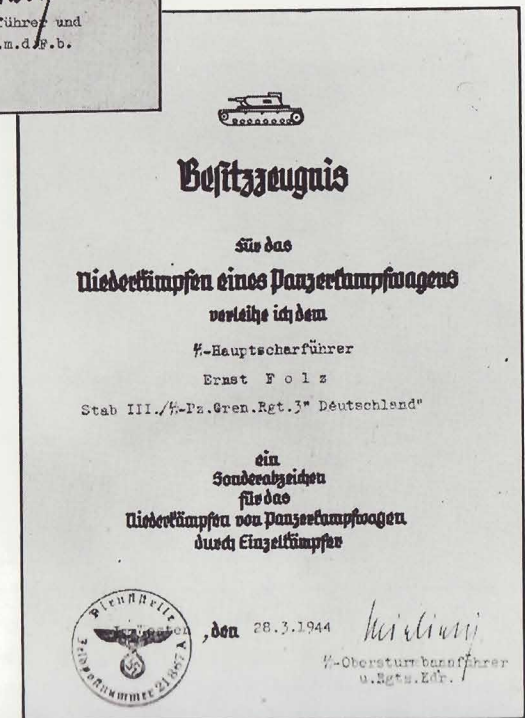
A typewritten field document for knocking-out two Soviet T34s. It is for a SS-Rottenführer in the LAH and is dated April 4, 1945.

(Translation of above): The destruction of two Soviet T-34 tanks by SS-Rottenführer Paul Schwinn is hereby confirmed. Place of Action: Nussbaum near Wien. Schwinn is entitled to the award of the Tank Destruction Badge. (Issued in the absence of a service stamp.)

Original period documents in the DIN A5 format also exist and are extremely rare. In most examples of this type, a facsimile of either the complete Tank Destruction Badge or just the tank alone is found at the top of the document. Both of the illustrated typewritten and the DIN A5 printed document below were given to SS-Hauptscharführer Ernst Folz.



Left: A preliminary award document, and below: an official award document in DIN A5 format.





George Petersen

Befitzzeugnis

Ich verleihe dem

Unteroffizier Ferdinand J ä o k l e

4./Flaksturmgp. 20 (mot.)

das

Sonderabzeichen für das Niederkämpfen
von Panzerkampfwagen usw.
durch Einzelkämpfer

Hauptquartier des Ob. d. L., den 8. Nov. 1944

Der Reichsminister der Luftfahrt
und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe

Jöring
Reichsmarschall

Die erfolgte Verleihung wird beglaubigt:
Der Chef des Luftwaffenpersonalsamts

Lurmer
Beauftragter

(Dienststempel)

Another official document in the DIN A5 format with Tank Destruction Badge at the top.

URKUNDE

DER
Feldw. Schmidt
3./J. 8. 430
VERNICHTETE
AM 14. Sept. 1942 IM NAHKAMPF
EINEN
SOWJET-PANZER.
FÜR DIESE MIT BESONDEREM
SCHNEID. AUSGEFÜHRTE TAT
SPRECHE ICH IHM MEINE VOLLE
ANERKENNUNG AUS.

K.H. QU., DEN 28.9.42

Meier
GENERAL DER INFANTERIE UND
KOMMANDIERENDER GENERAL

A folding award/appreciation document.

Ich verleihe dem
SS - Unterscharführer
M a n g o l d , Hermann
verst./ Kradsch. Batl. SS - Totenkopf-Division

das Sonderabzeichen
für die Vernichtung von Panzer-
kampfwagen durch Einzelkämpfer

weil er am 19.3.42 in Wasiljewschtschina
1 russ. T 34 - Panzerkampfwagen durch Unter-
werfen einer T - Mine vernichtete.

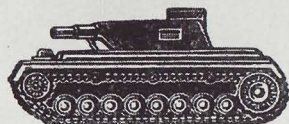
Def. Std. den 30. Sept. 42.
Der Divisionalkommandeur

Meier
SS - Oberführer.

G. Rudloff

A variant SS award document dated September 30, 1942 in the DIN A5 format. SS-Uschaf. Hermann Mangold received his Tank Destruction Badge for throwing a Teller mine in the path of an oncoming T-34 tank at Vasiljewsatshina on March 19, 1942.

The photos in this chapter are a good example of the variations of award documents issued during the war, but it should be noted that different variations probably also exist. As with the badges, accompanying documents have also been reproduced. A second opinion is always recommended before purchasing one of these items.



**IM NAMEN DES FÜHRERS
UND OBERSTEN BEFEHLSHABERS
DER WEHRMACHT**

**VERLEIHE ICH
DEM**

Pallschirm-Fahnenjunker-Oberfeldwebel

Georg Schmitz

4./Fsch.Pi.Btl.1

**DAS
SONDERABZEICHEN
FÜR DAS NIEDERKÄMPFEN VON
PANZERKAMPFWAGEN USW.
DURCH EINZELKÄMPFER**

Btl.Gef.Std. DEN 1. 11. 1941



Hörmann
Major und Bataillonskommandeur
(DIENSTGRAD UND DIENSTSTELLUNG)

An official document in the DIN A5 format to a paratrooper engineer.

Besitzzeugnis

Im Namen

des

Oberbefehlshabers der Luftwaffe

verleihe ich

dem

Leutnant

Karl Berger

das

Sonderabzeichen für das Niederkämpfen
von Panzerkampfwagen
durch Einzelkämpfer

den, 20. September 1944



Forstner
Oberstleutnant und Divisionsführer

Award document to a *Luftwaffe* paratrooper
who went on to be a Knight's Cross holder.

Besitzzeugnis

Dem Oberjäger

Diengisch und Dienststellung

Erich Tews

Ort und Name

2./Pallsch.-Jg.Brn.u.Ausb.Rgt. 3

Truppenteil

wurde das

vernichtungs

Panzerkampfabzeichen

in ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

verliehen

Gef.-Stand, den 6.10.44

Ort und Datum



Schulz
Unterschrift

Hauptmann u. Btl.-Kanzl.

Diengisch und Dienststellung

Wsp. Nr. 8. III. 3. 42 100. 08.

A variant award document using a Tank Assault
Badge document and modifying it to use as a Tank
Destruction Badge document.

Vorläufiges
Besitzzeugnis

Dem

Oberfeldwebel Walter Hergert

13./Gren.Rgt. 335

verleihe ich

das Sonderabzeichen in Gold

für das Niederkämpfen von 5 Panzer-
kampfwagen durch Einzelkämpfer



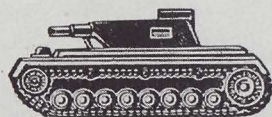
Im Felde, den 17.4.1945

Grenadier Regiment 335

J.V.

Hörmann
Hauptmann

Preliminary award document for the
Tank Destruction Badge in Gold (five
tank kills).



IM NAMEN DES FÜHRERS
UND OBERSTEN BEFEHLSHABERS
DER WEHRMACHT

VERLEIHE ICH
DEM

Fahnenjunker - Oberfeldwebel

Wilhelm Peters

DAS
SONDERABZEICHEN
FÜR DAS NIEDERKÄMPFEN VON
PANZERKAMPFWAGEN USW.
DURCH EINZELKÄMPFER

O.U. . DEN 29. 1. 1945

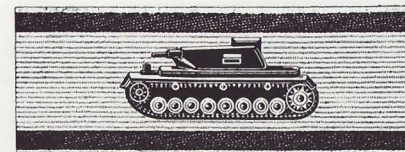
Fallschirm-Armee-Waffenschule



(DIENSTGRAD UND DIENSTSTELLUNG)

Hauptmann
u. stellv. Kommandeur

An official document in the DIN A5 format to paratrooper Wilhelm Peters. This January 29, 1945 document is for his fifth kill. See entry in Peters' *Soldbuch* on facing page.



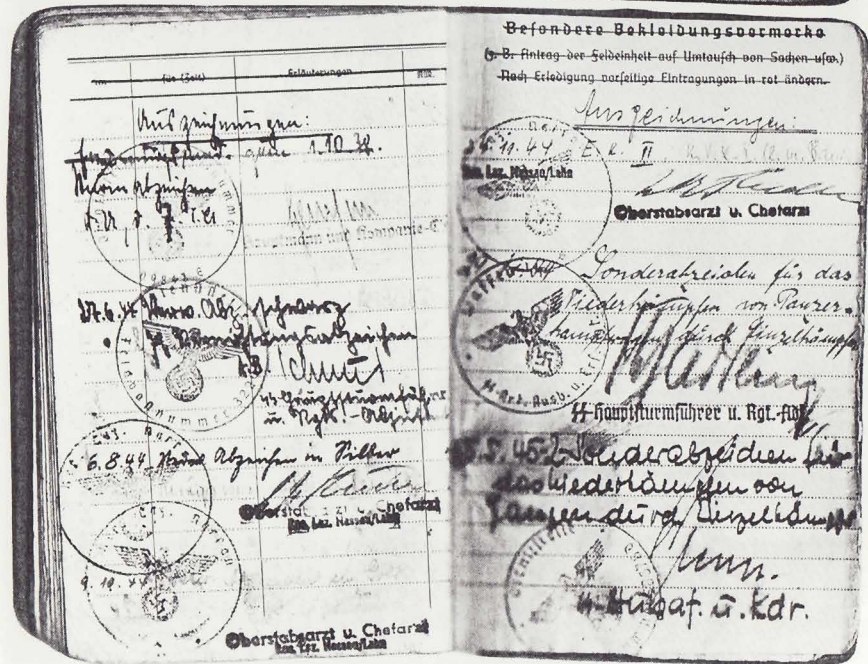
Soldbuch/Wehrpass Entries

Soldbuch and Wehrpass collecting is a field in which identifying awards entered in them is only a part of what makes a particular one valuable. Entries of the Tank Destruction Badge in these are quite rare.

am	für (Zeit)	Erfäuterungen	Stdt.	Ref.
Orden u. Ehrenzeichen				
1. 10.44 1. Panzer-Vermindestungs-Abzeichen				
Heydt				
Oberleutnant 5. Regiment R.-Kdr.				
1.11.44		Ritterkreuz 2. Eisernen Kreuz		
25.11.44		2. Panzervernichtungsabzeichen		
29.1.45		3. Panzervernichtungsabzeichen		
29.1.45		4. Panzervernichtungsabzeichen		
29.1.45		5. Panzervernichtungsabzeichen		
1.2.45		Verwundeten-Abzeichen in Gold		
6.8.44		Nahkampfspange - Silber -		
Oberleutn. v. Batt.-Kdr.				

Eric Queen

Entries in Dr. Wilhelm Peters' *Soldbuch* showing he was awarded five Tank Destruction Badges as a member of "Kampfgruppe von der Heydt" and the Fallschirmarmee Waffenschule.



44

Orden und Ehrenzeichen

6.7.44 Tausch-Abschicken an Goldmann

Oberstabsarzt u. Chefarzt

4.4.45, 2. Pausen-Vernichtg.-Bz.

E.O. *Teinittel*

Kaptein am

Teinittel

Kaptein u. Kaplt. Th.

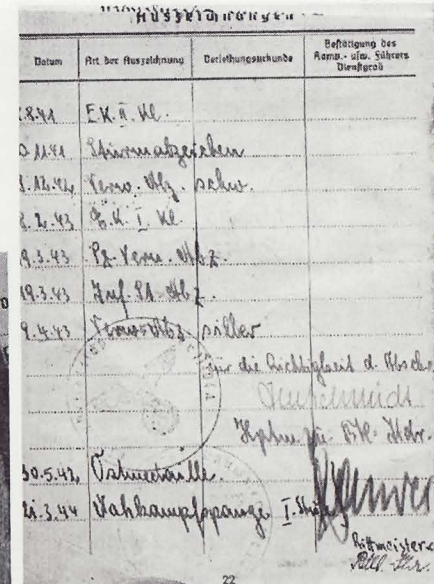
72 -

72 -

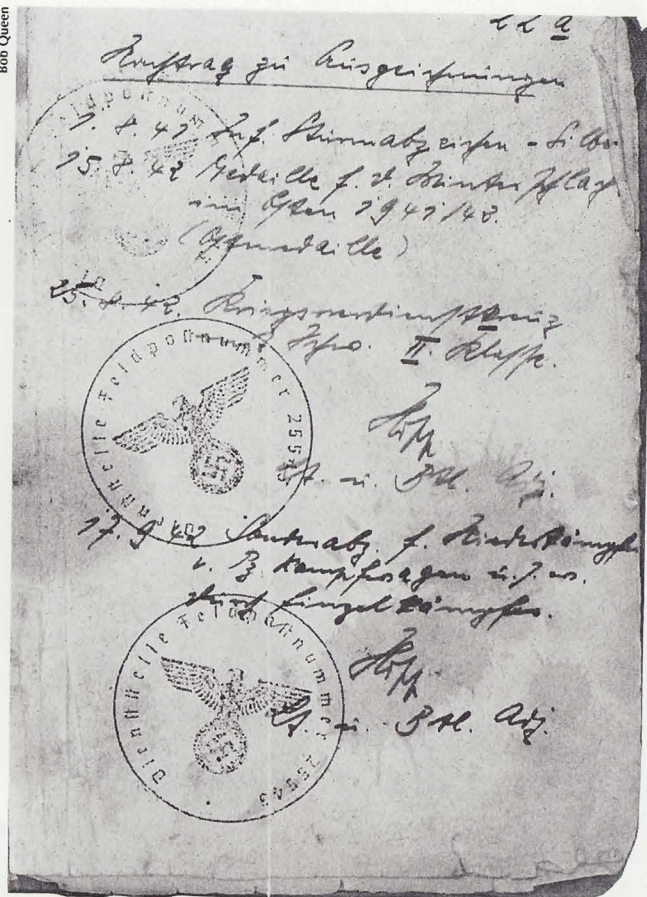
72 -

72 -

72 -



45

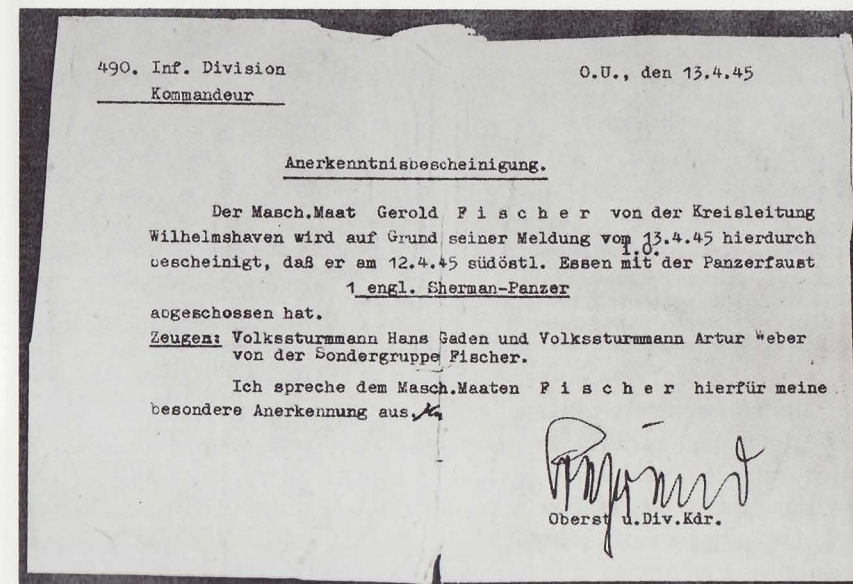


Another Soldbuch entry for the Tank Destruction Badge which is dated September 17, 1942.



Navy Awards & Documents

Awards of the Tank Destruction Badge to naval personnel are documented, but after many years this author has not been able to obtain a photo of a sailor wearing a Tank Destruction Badge. Since these seamen were thrown into ground combat late in the war, photos may be all but impossible to find. In interviews and telephone conversations with veterans who served in these naval infantry formations, the author was able to determine that they knew of awards of the Tank Destruction Badge, but could give no further information. One of the most notable commanders of a naval infantry battalion was Oakleaves holder Reinhard Hardegen, who previously commanded U-123. He was assigned to the 2nd Naval Infantry Division near the end of the war.



Acknowledgement document to Masch. Maat Gerold Fischer for knocking-out a British Sherman tank with a Panzerfaust on April 12, 1945, southeast of Essen in Oldenburg.

490. Infanterie-Division

13 April 1945

Commanding Officer

(Translation): Certificate of Recognition

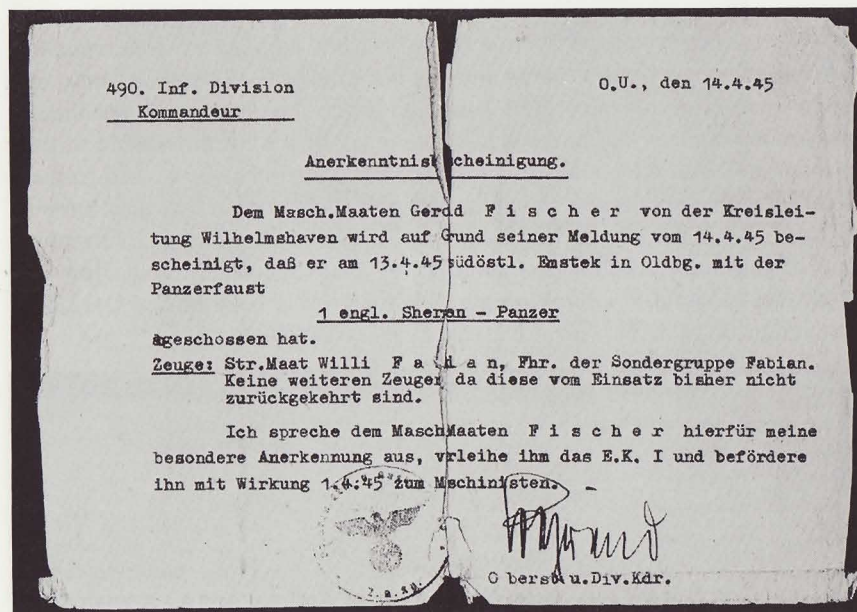
Masch.Maate Gerold Fischer of the Wilhelmshaven District Command is, on the basis of his report of 13 April 1945, hereby vouched for in his claim to have destroyed a British Sherman tank southeast of Essen in Oldenburg on 12 April 1945.

Eyewitnesses: Volkssturmmann Hans Gaden and
Volkssturmmann Arthur Weber of
Sondergruppe Fischer

I hereby express my special recognition to Masch.Maate
Fischer.

(Signature)

Oberst u.Div.Kdr.



Another appreciation document to Masch. Maate Fischer for destroying a second British Sherman with a Panzerfaust on April 13, 1945, southeast of Emstek. He was also awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class and promoted to Maschinist effective April 1, 1945. There was only one confirmation this time as the other potential witnesses failed to return.

In the last weeks of the war, seamen who were pressed into a ground combat role often performed with unquestioned valor. One *Wehrmacht* report, dated April 26, 1945, stated: "Single combatants of the 2nd Naval Infantry Division destroyed 18 tanks within a 48-hour period west of Bremen."

U-boat personnel, whose boats could no longer sail from Hamburg, were quickly uniformed in field-grey and formed into a tank destroyer battalion. Under the command of *Korvettenkapitän* Peter Cremer, as well as *Kapitänleutnant* Peschel and Thäter, they were led south of Hamburg to con-

front the advancing British forces. There, using primarily the *Panzerfaust*, they single-handedly destroyed approximately 40 British tanks and armored vehicles between April 18-20, 1945. Their aggressive actions temporarily stopped the British advance in this area.



U-Boot Archiv



Above: Members of "Marine-Panzervernichtungsbataillon" Cremer, made up of mainly volunteers from a U-Boat base. This Tank Destruction Battalion of the *Kriegsmarine* was formed in February of 1945. From left to right: Commander of the *II. Kompanie* (name unknown); *Korvettenkapitän* Erich Cremer; unknown; *Hauptmann* Paul Löser, the unit 1a; and Gerhard Thäter, commander of the *I. Kompanie*.

Left: *Korvettenkapitän* Erich Cremer.



Hitler Youth Awards

As mentioned in the History section, numerous awards of the Tank Destruction Badge were made to members of the Hitler Youth. Early in the autumn of 1944 selected Hitler Youth were trained intensively in the use of the *Panzerfaust* or *Panzerschreck* and soon came to form the reliable core of *Volkssturm* battalions. When they were removed to complete their military training the *Volkssturm* units were critically weakened. The accompanying photo shows one of those young tank killers awarded a Tank Destruction Badge for fighting in the streets of Berlin in the closing days of the war. It



Charita

Some of the 20 Hitler Youths who had fought as tank killers or had been on the Oder Front gather for an audience with Adolf Hitler in the bombed-out Chancellery on March 19, 1945.



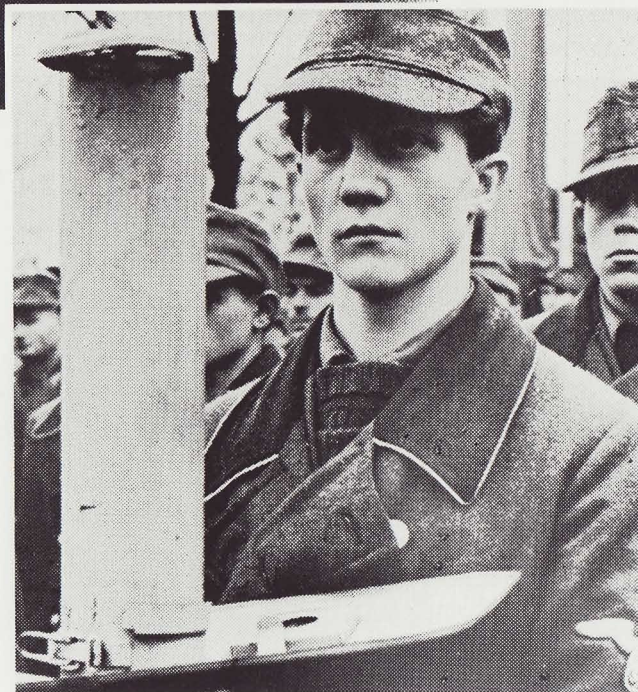
A young defender in Berlin, April 1945.

This specially trained Hitler Youth is shown instructing elderly members of the *Volkssturm* in the use of the *Panzerfaust*.



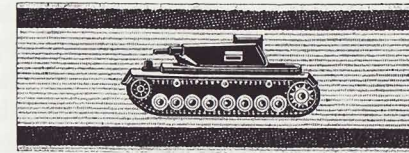


During the fighting on the Oder River and around Berlin many enemy tanks were destroyed by *Panzerfausts*. This Hitler Youth serving in a *Volkssturm* unit, is equipped with such a weapon.



This young *Volkssturm* member is armed with a Rocket Launcher M43, often referred to as an "*Ofenrohr*" (stove-pipe) or "*Panzer-schreck*" (tank terror).

should also be noted that large numbers of the Iron Cross 1st & 2nd Class were awarded to these brave teenagers. There are no estimates of how many tanks were destroyed by Hitler Youth formations, but as they played a major role in the defense of the capital the number is certainly quite high.



Individual Histories

The Tank Destruction Badge was conceived as a response to the vast numbers of Soviet tanks being encountered by German soldiers since the invasion of June 22, 1941. As the war went on it became possible to earn the badge in the other theaters of operations as well—with one notable exception. The nature of war in North Africa where tank engagements took place at long range on flat, featureless terrain devoid of cover, afforded foot soldiers little opportunity to stalk enemy armor. The more European terrain of Tunisia seems also not to have produced any record of Tank Destruction Badges being awarded.

The observant reader will note that a great many of the individuals listed below served in either their regiment's 14th (*Pz. Jäger*) or 16th (*Infanterie-Geschütz*) companies or in engineer units. The former were accustomed to fighting tanks and were more aware of their vulnerable points than their comrades in the rifle companies, while the later were familiar with all manner of explosive and incendiary devices.

Multiple awards of the Tank Destruction Badge often resulted in an individual being presented some of Germany's highest medals for bravery. The following section gives the reader a photo and brief history of some of these "Tank Killers."

When the German Army was faced with overwhelming odds during the last two years of the war, special "Tank Killer" units were formed. Their task was to seek out and destroy enemy armor threatening the undermanned German formations and positions. These detachments proved to be highly successful, but could not overcome the endless supply of armor which was being thrown at them. These small groups of 12 to 15 men, all volunteers experienced in combating tank attacks, became known as "tank killer groups."

Cases of multiple awards were common as the desperate battles continued. The highest number of individual tank kills was twenty-one. This was accomplished by Knight's Cross holder *Oberleutnant* Günther Viezenz. He survived the war, which, when the odds are assessed, is an amazing feat in itself. His courage is unquestioned, as is that of all who took on these steel monsters single-handedly.

Ultimately, the Tank Destruction Badge, along with all the other combat awards, and in particular their higher, numbered grades was emblematic of the "hold-out" mentality that sought to blind the German people to the catastrophe that was rapidly overtaking the Reich in the last year of the war.

The following individual histories represent only a few documented cases. Many more thousands remain un-mentioned in historical records or books.

To simplify the text the following abbreviations may be used throughout the "Individual Histories" chapter: ICII=Iron Cross IInd Class; ICI=Iron Cross Ist Class; CCC=Close Combat Clasp; GC=German Cross in Gold; KC=Knight's Cross; TDB=Tank Destruction Badge.

Hinrich Ahrens – 4 kills

Hinrich Ahrens was awarded the Knight's Cross on January 9, 1945 while serving as an *Unteroffizier* and anti-tank gun crew chief with *Gren. Rgt. 1141 of 561. Volks-G.-Div.* During a large scale Soviet tank assault on October 16, 1944, Ahren's PaK unit destroyed many of the 70 enemy tanks his division was credited with. It was during this action that *Unteroffizier* Ahrens earned his fourth Tank Destruction Badge for knocking out a Soviet T-34 with hand grenades.



Hinrich Ahrens.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–August 10, 1942

ICI– November 29, 1942

GC in Gold–April 7, 1944

Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)–August 10, 1944

Tank Destruction Badge–February 7, 1943 (1),

November 19, 1943 (2),

November 18, 1944 (1)

Friedrich Anding – 18 kills

Born June 26, 1915, died February 8, 1996.

Oberleutnant Anding was awarded the Knight's Cross on April 20, 1945 for destroying six Soviet tanks and five armored cars in a few hours of combat. At the time of the award, he was serving as adjutant of *Pz.-Jäg.-Abt. "GD."*



Friedrich Anding.

This action took place in northern Germany on April 14 & 15, 1945. Anding's anti-tank unit, armed with a good supply of *Panzerfausts* was attacked by a large number of British tanks and armored cars. Anding was by now an experienced tank killer. He knew that if the lead and rear tanks of a column could be put out of action, the rest would be easy to pick off before they could maneuver themselves out of trouble. In the confined roadway approaches, this is precisely the way the action started! Anding related to this

author that he and a few comrades fired *Panzerfaust* after *Panzerfaust* until the entire force had been destroyed or the crews had abandoned their tanks. "The lead tank erupted in a ball of flames, when just after my first *Panzerfaust* struck, the ammunition went off." He went on: "I believe it was *Obergefreiter* Stützle who put the rear tank out of action." When it was all over, *Major* Gustav Walle, Andings commanding officer, had 9 kills and *Obergefreiter* Nepomuk Stützle had 7 kills.

Along with Anding, both of these men were awarded the Knight's Cross.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—date unavailable

ICI—date unavailable

Close Combat Clasp (Silver)—date unavailable

GC in Gold—date unavailable

18 Tank Destruction Badges—dates unavailable

KC—April 20, 1945

Ernst-Günther Baade – 1 kill

As an *Oberst* and commanding officer of 90. *Panzer-Grenadier Division*, *Oberst* Baade proved to be a true front line commander. Just prior to being awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross he engaged an enemy tank and destroyed it with a magnetic charge. After being awarded the Oakleaves he was promoted to the rank of *Generalmajor*.



Ernst-Günther Baade.

Awards & Dates:

KC—June 27, 1942

KC w/Oakleaves—February 22, 1944

KC w/Oakleaves and Swords—November 16, 1944

General Baade was severely wounded on April 5, 1945 and died from these wounds on May 8, 1945, the day the war ended.

Hans Baidner – 2 kills

In the early morning of April 9, 1944 *Gefreiter* Baidner was serving as a machine-gun leader with the 11./*Jäger-Reg.* 228, 101. *Jäger Division*. The Soviets launched a tank assault on Baidner's position. Baidner stood his ground and destroyed two T-34 tanks with *Panzerfausts*. His action turned back the attack and on June 24, 1944 *Gefreiter* Baidner was awarded the Knight's Cross.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—March 15, 1944

ICI—April 2, 1944

KC—June 24, 1944



Hans Baidner.

Franz Bäke – 3 kills

Oberst Bäke was one of Germany's most highly decorated soldiers. As a *Major d.R.*, *Kdr. II./Pz. Reg. 11* he received the Knight's Cross on January 11, 1943. He went on to be awarded the Oakleaves on August 1, 1943 (262nd recipient) and the Swords on February 21, 1944 (49th recipient). As a tank commander himself, Bäke knew all too well the weak points of a tank, the end result being three enemy tanks personally destroyed to his credit.



Franz Bäke.



Ludwig Barth.

Ludwig Barth – 1 kill

Ludwig Barth was serving as a *Stabsfeldwebel* and platoon leader in the 14./Inf. Reg. 14, 78. Inf. Div. when the Soviets started a large scale tank battle near Peski. *Stabsfeldwebel* Barth, faced with these oncoming tanks, charged the lead vehicle and destroyed it with a T-mine. For this action he was awarded the Knight's Cross. Barth was killed in action on November 25, 1942.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–August 14, 1941

ICI–October 4, 1941

KC–August 20, 1942

Rudolf Bayer – 1 kill

Oberfeldwebel Bayer was awarded the Knight's Cross on February 21, 1944 while serving as platoon leader in 14./(*Pz. Jäg.*)/*Gren. Reg. 112*.

He was killed in action on the Eastern Front on July 14, 1944.

Awards & Dates:

KC–February 21, 1944



Rudolf Bayer.



Heinz Berger.

Heinz Berger – 1 kill

As an *Oberleutnant* and battery commander in II./*Flak Reg. 411*, *Flak Reg. 151 (mot.)*, Heinz Berger was awarded the Knight's Cross.

Berger died on October 19, 1996.

Awards & Dates:

KC–April 3, 1943

Tank Destruction Badge–date unavailable

Karl Berger – 2 kills

Lt. d.R. Berger was awarded the Knight's Cross on February 7, 1945 while serving as a company commander with *10./Fsch. Jäg. Reg. 15*.



Awards & Dates:

Tank Destruction Badge—
September 20, 1944
KC—February 7, 1945

Karl Berger.



Alfons Bialecki.

Alfons Bialecki – 2 kills

Oberleutnant d.R. Bialecki was a highly decorated junior officer, being awarded the Knight's Cross on September 17, 1944. Both of his Tank Destruction Badges were awarded five months after the action, on October 28, 1941, a good example of retroactive awarding.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—July 10, 1941
ICI—July 10, 1941
GC in Gold—June 1, 1944
2 Tank Destruction Badges—October 28, 1941 (retroactive date)
Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)—September 2, 1944,
(Silver)—October 4, 1944, (Gold)—November 17, 1944
KC—September, 17, 1944

Gustav-Adolf Blanchois – 1 kill

Gustav-Adolf Blanchois was awarded the Knight's Cross as a *Hauptmann* commanding *1./Gren.-Reg. 25*. As well as other awards for bravery, he had one enemy tank destroyed to his credit.



Reinhold Böhme.

Reinhold Böhme – 2 kills

At the time of the award of the Knight's Cross, *Oberfeldwebel* Böhme was a platoon leader in *13.(I.G.)/Gren.Reg. 162*. The award of the Knight's Cross was made on April 6, 1944, and together with his destruction of two enemy tanks single-handedly, earned him a good reputation in his company.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—1940
ICI—1942

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold—March 11, 1943
KC—July 20, 1944

Gustav-Adolf Blanchois.



2 Tank Destruction Badges—1944
Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)—1944
KC—April 6, 1944.

Hermann Bolte – 2 kills

Nothing is known about the action that took place which led to *Obersturmführer* being awarded his two Tank Destruction Badges. He served with *SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 2* of the “Das Reich” Division and was killed in action on August 16, 1944.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold—
July 2, 1944



Ustuf. Bolte, Ustuf. Braun, Ustuf. Otto, unknown, in the winter of 1943.

Hans-Georg Borck – 4 kills

Hans-Georg Borck was awarded the Knight's Cross on December 23, 1943 as an *Oberleutnant* and company commander of *3./Pz.Pi.Btl.209*. Two of his four Tank Destruction Badges were awarded on July 7, 1942 after he had destroyed two T-34 tanks with T-mines. Two more were awarded to Oblt. Borck, one on February 11, 1943 and one on November 9, 1943. Both were T-34s, knocked out by using magnetic hollow shape charges. Later in the war, with the advent of the *Panzerfaust*, the task of single-handed destruction became somewhat less dangerous. The weapons used by *Hauptmann* Borck were, by their very nature, much more hazardous.



Awards & Dates:

ICII—July 22, 1941
ICI—July 4, 1942
Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)—January 1, 1943
GC in Gold—March 11, 1943
Wound Badge in Gold—December 1943
2 Tank Destruction Badges—July 7 1942
1 Tank Destruction Badge—February 11, 1943
1 Tank Destruction Badge—November 9, 1943
KC—December 23, 1943

Christian Gottlieb Braun – 4 kills

Christian Gottlieb Braun's reputation as a "*Panzerknacker*," as well as the fact that he was awarded both the Knight's Cross and Oakleaves, testifies to his courage.

Braun's greatest tributes came to him as an NCO. Just after his promotion to *Leutnant* he was posted as a special instructor teaching individual tank destruction methods at *19. Armee's* Combat School (Upper Rhine). He died on January 1, 1987.



Christian Gottlieb Braun.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–September 12, 1941
ICI–October 5, 1941
GC in Gold–June 26, 1942
Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)–May 1, 1944
Close Combat Clasp (Silver)–April 9, 1945
1 Tank Destruction Badge–May 26, 1944
2 Tank Destruction Badges–August 1, 1944
1 Tank Destruction Badge–October 3, 1944
KC–July 15, 1944
Oakleaves to the KC–December 9, 1944.

Klaus Coracino – 1 kill

Oberleutnant d.R. Coracino received the Knight's Cross on September 2, 1944 while commander of *Sturmgesch. Begleitkompanie* (Infantry Escort Company) 254/1./Gren.Reg.431. The mission of the *Begleitkompanie* was to closely accompany *Sturmgeschütze* into battle, fight back enemy infantry and tank-hunting teams, and protect the vehicles until withdrawn.



Awards & Dates:

ICII–August 5, 1941
ICI–December 25, 1941
GC in Gold–May 26, 1943
KC–September 2, 1944

Klaus Coracino.

Kurt Creuznacher – 1 kill

Major Creuznacher, while commander of *Kradschützen-Btl. 2* of the *2.Panzer-Division*, was awarded the German Cross in Gold as well as one Tank Destruction Badge.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–Date unavailable
ICI–Date unavailable
GC in Gold–February 14, 1942
1 Tank Destruction Badge–Spring 1942

Major Creuznacher stands before a World War I tank on display at a museum in Smolensk. Creuznacher was awarded the TDB between March 9, 1942 (institution date) and May 1942 making it one of the first officially awarded badges.



Oberleutnant Eckel – 2 kills

During heavy fighting in the Cassino area on March 19, 1944 a company of enemy tanks attacked Eckel's paratroop unit. Most were knocked out by German artillery but the remainder of them rolled through the German positions. As commander of the *14.Kompanie/FJR4*, Eckel personally destroyed two of them.



Oblt. Eckel.



Alfred Egghardt.

Alfred Egghardt – 5 kills

Leutnant Egghardt was awarded the Knight's Cross on April 20, 1945 while serving with *Sturmgeschütz Brigade 912*. He became known for his bravery in single-handed tank destruction as well as the commander of an assault gun. He is an example of individual courage in hand-to-hand combat, which eventually led to the award of the Knight's Cross.

After his assault gun was put out of action in the autumn of 1944, Leutnant Egghardt attacked a Soviet tank and destroyed it with a hand grenade. He repeated this heroic act on four other occasions.

Ewald Ehm – 2 kills

A highly decorated member of the *16./SS-Pz. Gren. Reg. 3, 2.SS-Pz. Div.*, SS-Unterscharführer Ehm served under Oakleaves holder, Heinz Macher.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–July 28, 1941

ICI–February 4, 1943

GC in Gold–September 16, 1943

Close Combat Clasp (Silver)–1944

2 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable



Above: Ewald Ehm, Heinz Macher and K. Förster, all members of the *Pionier Btl.*, "Deutschland" Regiment.



Josef Fink – 7 kills

Unteroffizier Josef Fink, while a member of 8./Pz.Gren.Btl.2106, was awarded the Knight's Cross for his single-handed destruction over a two day period of seven Sherman tanks using the hand-held *Panzerfaust*.



Awards & Dates:

KC–December 9, 1944

7 Tank Destruction Badges–November 28 & 30, 1944

Ferdinand Frech – 4 kills

Oberleutnant Frech was posthumously promoted to *Hauptmann* in November of 1944, less than a year after being awarded the Knight's Cross on December 5, 1943. He was the leader of a special "tank killer" unit while serving as company commander 1./Jäger Btl 2. All of his tank kills were T-34s which were destroyed with hand-held magnetic charges. During one of his kills, *Oberleutnant* Frech, while under heavy small arms fire, made a daring attack on a T-34. He placed a magnetic mine in the drive wheel area of the tracks and jumped for cover. The resulting blast immobilized the tank, forcing the crew to abandon it.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–May 15, 1943

KC–December 5, 1943

Siegfried Gerke – 1 kill

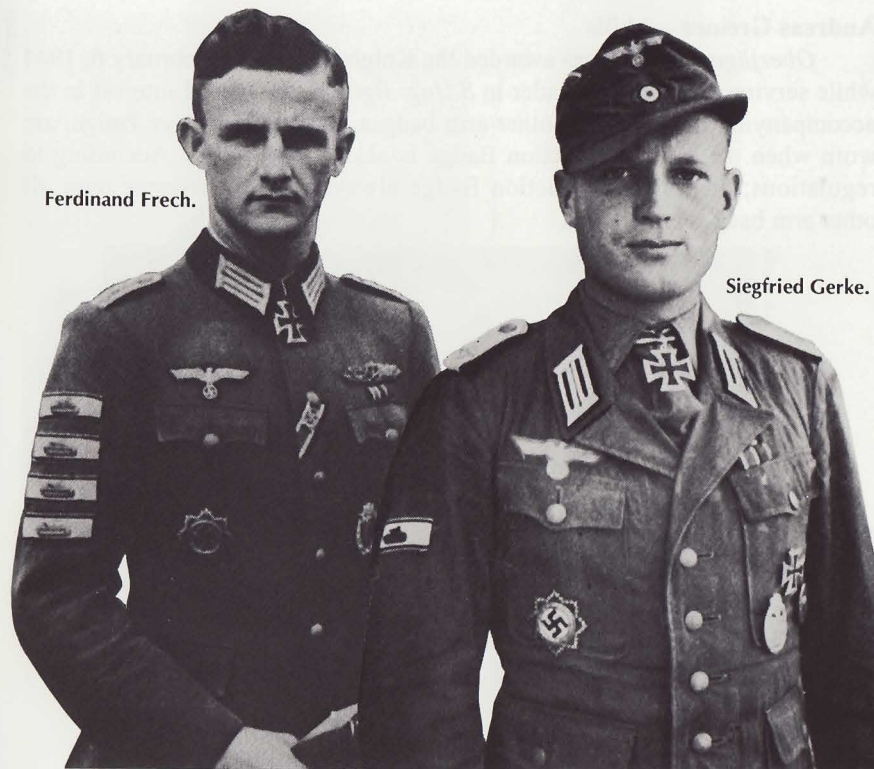
Siegfried Gerke was awarded the Knight's Cross on December 2, 1942 as a *Leutnant d.R.*, platoon leader of 3./Pz.Pi. Btl. 16 for actions on the Eastern Front.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–November 16, 1942

KC–December 2, 1942.

Ferdinand Frech.



Siegfried Gerke.

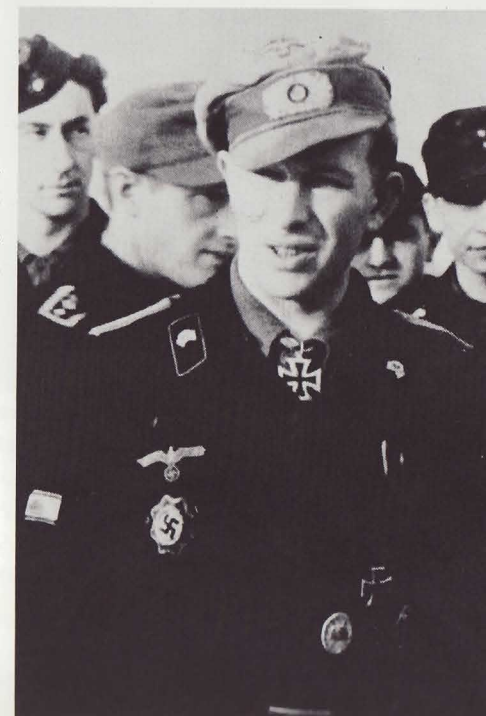
Josef Glatz – 1 kill

Leutnant Glatz was commander of the 1./Pz. Jäg. Abt. 46 when he was awarded his Knight's Cross, German Cross and Tank Destruction Badge.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–August 7, 1944

KC–January 12, 1945



Josef Glatz.

Andreas Greiner – 2 kills

Oberjäger Greiner was awarded the Knight's Cross on February 6, 1944 while serving as a platoon leader in 8./Jag. Rgt. 75. Of special interest in the accompanying photo is how other arm badges, such as his *Jäger* badge, are worn when the Tank Destruction Badge is also on the sleeve. According to regulations, the Tank Destruction Badge always took precedence over all other arm badges or insignia.



Andreas Greiner.

Heinz Grimberg – 1 kill

As a *Hauptmann* commanding Pz.Pi. Btl.19, Heinz Grimberg was awarded the Knight's Cross on April 14, 1945. He was one of many combat engineers to be awarded the Tank Destruction Badge.

Awards & Dates:

Close Combat Clasp (Silver)–1944
GC in Gold–December 16, 1942
KC–April 14, 1945

J.R. Angolia



Heinz Grimberg.

Hermann Haderecker.



Hermann Haderecker – 1 kill

Oberst Haderecker was commanding Gren. Reg. 20 when he was awarded the Tank Destruction Badge, and then later the Knight's Cross on May 4, 1944 for his gallantry in action.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–date unavailable
ICI–date unavailable
Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)–date unavailable
GC in Gold–April 14, 1942
Tank Destruction Badge–1943
KC–May 4, 1944



This *Füsilier* of the *Grossdeutschland-Division* is armed with a *Panzerfaust* as he watches a recently knocked-out Soviet T-34 burn.



A knocked-out Sherman in the battle area of Carentan, July 11, 1944.

J. Jensen

Josef Heichele – 2 kills

Hauptmann Heichele was commander of *Füsilier-Bataillon 129/20. Panzer-Division*, which was holding the heights south of Newel when the Soviets broke through the German lines in December 1943. Heichele, with 30 of his men, counter-attacked and destroyed the intruding forces. He was wounded in the engagement but nevertheless his troops restored the original defense line. He was awarded the Knight's Cross for this action. He went on to receive the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross as a *Major* and commander of *Füsilier-Bataillon 129* which was now assigned to *129. Infanterie-Division* with *Heeresgruppe Nord*. He had shown extraordinary courage and leadership in the heavy fighting near Rozan.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–August 15, 1941
 ICI–November 6, 1941
 GC in Gold–February 14, 1943
 KC–January 31, 1944
 Oakleaves to KC–February 17, 1945
 2 Tank Destruction Badges–
 dates unavailable



Josef Heichele.

Hans Hirning – 1 kill

SS-Oberscharführer Hirning was awarded the Knight's Cross on October 23, 1942 while a *Rottenführer* with the 6./SS-Totenkopf-Infantry Reg., 1. SS-Totenkopf-Div. He was killed in action on April 30, 1945.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–October 24, 1941

ICI–July 14, 1942

KC–October 23, 1942



Hans Hirning receiving his Knight's Cross.

Hanns Hönscheid – 3 kills

As an *Oberfeldwebel*, *Kriegsberichterstatter der Fallschirmtruppe* Hanns Hönscheid took an active part in combat as can be seen in the accompanying photo. He was presented with the German Cross in Gold as well as the Knight's Cross on the same day. The Close Combat Clasp as well as three Tank Destruction Badges equally attested to his courage.



J. Lukens

War correspondent Hanns Hönscheid.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold – March 1, 1945

KC–March 1, 1945

3 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable

Hermann-Gustav Jochims – 4 kills

Hermann Jochims was awarded the Knight's Cross on September 19, 1943 as a *Hauptmann* and commander of 7./Gren.Reg.90 (mot.). He was killed in Berlin on April 28, 1945 as a *Major* and commander of Pz.Gr.Rgt.51.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–September 18, 1939

ICI–July 25, 1941

GC in Gold–June 3, 1943

Close Combat Clasp (Gold)–date unavailable

4 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable

Hermann Jochims.



Vincenz Kaiser – 4 kills

Vincenz Kaiser was awarded the Knight's Cross as a *Hauptsturmführer* and commander of III.(SPW.)/SS-Pz. G.R. "Der Führer." The photo shows him on the day of the award, April 6, 1943. As can be seen, he had already



K. H. Worthmann, S. Stadler and V. Kaiser receive their Knight's Crosses.

destroyed four tanks in close combat, and he had achieved a reputation as an expert in this dangerous type of fighting. He was awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on April 19, 1945, and was reported missing the next day, presumed killed in action. Kaiser is credited with four tanks destroyed in just two days of combat. All of these kills were accomplished with satchel charges or magnetic mines which he attached to Soviet tanks in close fighting. He was also awarded the German Cross in Gold during this same period of time (fall 1942) for his bravery in combat in the southern sector of the Eastern Front.

Awards & Dates:

ICI-July 28, 1941

ICII-August 24, 1941

GC in Gold-October 27, 1942

Close Combat Clasp (Gold)-
date unavailable

4 Tank Destruction Badges-
dates unavailable

KC-April 6, 1943

Oakleaves to KC-April 19, 1945



Vincenz Kaiser.

Peter Kiesgen.



Peter Kiesgen – 5 kills

Leutnant Kiesgen was awarded the Knight's Cross on October 5, 1941 for actions on the Eastern Front just after the invasion. He was acting company commander of I./I.R. 239. The photos show him wearing five silver badges (i.e., done prior to the institution of the gold Tank Destruction Badge on December 18, 1943). Later in the war Lt. Kiesgen was posted as an instructor to the Hitler Youth teaching the technique of combating armored attacks. When faced with the typical Soviet method of armored and infantry



Kiesgen instructing Hitler Youth members on tactics.

attacks, he inspired others under his command by his personal example. His act of destroying a T-34 tank with a T-mine and then moments later one with a homemade satchel charge, halted the Soviet attack and led to a counter strike which saved the day for the Germans. Near the Don River basin in the summer of 1942 Kiesgen was severely wounded while attempting to knock out a T-34. He managed to attach a magnetic mine on the side of the tank, but it was defective and did not explode. It was during his second attempt that he was hit by machine gun fire.

Gerhard Konopka – 4 kills

Olt. Konopka was awarded the Knight's Cross on August 29, 1943 for actions on the Eastern Front. Three T-34 tanks and one KV-52 tank fell previously to his close-in attacks. After serving with *II./G.R.(mot)* "GD," he was posted as an instructor teaching how to combat tank attacks.

The first of his four tank kills was a T-34 which had broken through the German defensive area around Rzhev, Russia. *Oberleutnant* Konopka attacked it from the rear and was able to place a satchel charge under the back of the turret, close to the engine compartment. During these back and forth battles he was able to repeat this action by destroying three more Russian tanks in the same manner. "Try to outflank them, get in from the rear and place your charge," was his method. He went on to say that the magnetic charge seemed to be the safest anti-tank devise because there was no danger of it "falling off" once it was placed.

When his unit was finally pulled out to be re-fitted, *Oberleutnant* Konopka was awarded four Tank Destruction Badges and the German Cross in Gold. For actions a year later he was awarded the Knight's Cross and by the end of the war he had also been awarded the Close Combat Clasp in Bronze and the Wound Badge in Gold for being wounded in action nine times. His service to his country did not end there, he also held the rank of *Arbeitsführer* in the Labor Service and commanded a regiment of 2.(RAD)I.D. "Friedrich Ludwig Jahn."

Gerhard Konopka was born on March 27, 1911 and died on January 29, 1997.



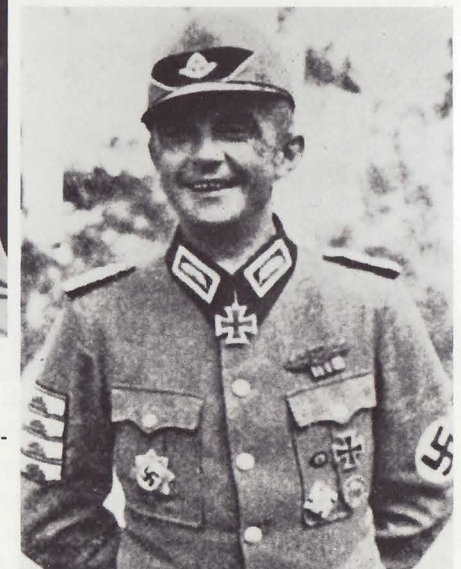
Gerhard Konopka shows a captured weapon to Dr. Goebbels.



Konopka proudly wears all of his combat decorations on his RAD uniform.

Awards & Dates:

ICII-January 18, 1941
ICI-July 1, 1941
GC in Gold-October 9, 1942
4 Tank Destruction Badges-
dates unavailable
Close Combat Clasp (Gold)-
April 20, 1945
KC-August 29, 1943



Harald Krieg – 1 kill

The Knight's Cross was awarded to *Oberleutnant* Krieg on July 15, 1941 while he served as company commander of 4./Schtz. Reg. 1.



Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–June 5, 1942

KC–July 15, 1941

Tank Destruction Badge–
date unavailable

Major Harald Krieg while commanding
I(SPW/Pz.Gr.Rgt. "GD" in May 1944,
near Jassy, Romania.



Wilhelm Kuhlilm.

Wilhelm Kuhlilm – 2 kills

Wilhelm Kuhlilm was awarded the German Cross on April 20, 1942 as a platoon leader in a *Fallschirmjägerregiment*. As an *Oberleutnant* and company commander in *Fsch.Pz.Gren.Rgt. 3 "HG,"* Kuhlilm earned the Knight's Cross on November 30, 1944 for action in East Prussia.

Walter Kuhn – 4 kills

Walter Kuhn was awarded the Knight's Cross while serving as an *Obergefreiter* and gun aimer in 3./Pz. Jäg. Abt. 1. He also had four destroyed enemy tanks to his credit.

Awards & Dates:

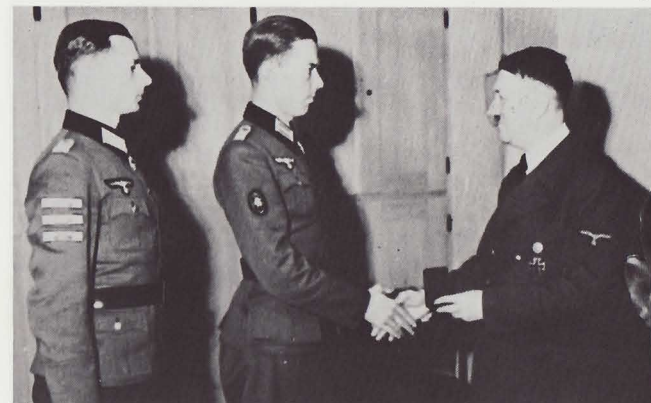
KC–August 23, 1943

4 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable

Ekkehard Kylling-Schmidt – 3 kills

Leutnant Kylling-Schmidt, while commanding 2./Inf. Reg. 26/30 Inf. Div., was awarded the Knight's Cross for actions on the Eastern Front in July and August, 1941. Lt. Kylling-Schmidt personally destroyed a Soviet tank during fierce fighting at this time. In September and October 1941, a large Soviet offensive found *Oberleutnant* Kylling-Schmidt again fighting off tank attacks. This time he knocked out two enemy tanks. Kylling-Schmidt was subsequently awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross on December 4, 1942.

All three of his tank kills were prior to the institution of the Tank Destruction Badge and were awarded retroactively on July 15, 1942.



Kylling-Schmidt and Harald von Hirschfeld receive their
Oakleaves from Hitler at Vinnitsa in December 1942.



Walter Kuhn.



Awards & Dates:

ICII–November 9, 1940

ICI–July 22, 1941

KC–October 20, 1941

Oakleaves to the KC–December 4, 1942

3 Tank Destruction Badges–July 15, 1942

Werner Lang — 2 kills

As a *Fahnenjunker-Feldwebel d.R.*, serving with 3./*Panzer-Jäger Abteilung 128*, 23 Pz.-Div. Werner Lang destroyed two Soviet tanks in close combat. This action also resulted in the simultaneous award of the ICII and the ICI.

Awards & Dates:

ICII-1943

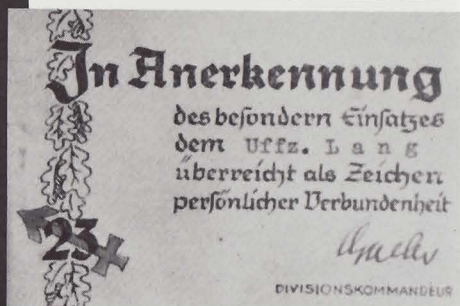
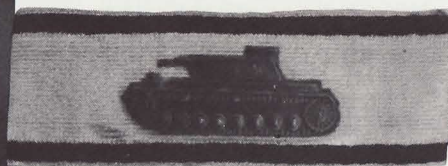
ICI-1943

2 Tank Destruction Badges-1943

Bill Shea



Werner Lang.



Unteroffizier Lang's Tank Destruction Badge in Silver and a certificate of appreciation from the 23rd Panzer Division's commander.

Karl Heinz Lichte — 2 kills

At the end of the war Karl Heinz Lichte was a *SS-Hauptsturmführer* and company commander in *SS-Pz.-Reg. 5/Wiking Division*. He had been awarded the Knight's Cross as well as the Wound Badge in Gold.

Early in 1942 he destroyed his first enemy tank in close combat and was to repeat this act in the fall of 1944.

Awards & Dates:

ICII-1939

ICI-July 1941

GC in Gold-October 1944

Tank Assault Badge for 50 engagements-October 1944

Wound Badge (Gold)-1944

2 Tank Destruction Badges-1942 and 1944

KC-March 25, 1945



Karl Heinz Lichte.

Erich Löffler.



Erich Löffler — 4 kills

Hauptmann Löffler was awarded the Knight's Cross on October 7, 1942 while commanding *II./I.R.57*. He was known in his unit as an expert in close-in fighting with four tank kills to his credit. *Oberstleutnant* Löffler was killed in action on March 17, 1945, while serving as *Kampfkommandant* (Garrison Commander) of Frankfurt am Main.

Awards & Dates:

ICII-date unavailable

ICI-date unavailable

GC in Gold-September 4, 1942

KC-October 7, 1942

Karl-Willi Lumpp — 1 kill

Oberleutnant der Reserve Lumpp was awarded the Knight's Cross and a Tank Destruction Badge while leader of 3./*Gren. Rgt.226*.

Awards & Dates:

ICI-date unavailable

KC-July 18, 1943

1 Tank Destruction Badge-date unavailable



Erich Löffler (left) and Peter Kiesgen.



Karl-Willi Lumppp.

Erich Lorenz – 2 kills

Major Erich Lorenz received the Knight's Cross on November 14, 1943 commanding *I./Gren. Reg. 287/96th Inf. Div.* on the Eastern front. There he destroyed in personal engagement two Soviet tanks and was wounded receiving the Wound Badge in Gold. On May 4, 1944 he was awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross. In the final days of the war he commanded the defensive stronghold at Potsdam where he was captured by the Soviets. Erich Lorenz died on December 10, 1984.



Erich Lorenz.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–August 25, 1941
ICI–September 26, 1941
Close Combat Spange (Gold)–
February 15, 1945
KC–November 14, 1943
Oakleaves to KC–May 4, 1944
2 Tank Destruction Badges–
dates unavailable

Heinz Macher – 1 kill

SS-Sturmabführer Macher was awarded the Knight's Cross on April 3, 1943 as company commander of *16. (Pi)/SS-Pz. G.R. 3 "Deutschland."* The award of the Oakleaves followed on August 19, 1944 (554th recipient), while still serving on the Eastern Front.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–September 24, 1941
ICI–March 15, 1942
GC in Gold–August 7, 1944
Close Combat Clasp (Gold)–October 18, 1944
Oakleaves to KC–August 19, 1944
1 Tank Destruction Badge–date unavailable



Heinz Macher.



Obergefreiter Metzl.

Obergefreiter Metzl – 2 kills

While Metzl was serving with *7./Pz.-Rgt. 3* of the *2.Panzer-Division*, he was credited with destroying two Soviet tanks single-handedly. In September 1942 when six Soviet tanks had broken through the main German defense line at Trissely on the Eastern Front, five were quickly destroyed by German tank

fire and the sixth was knocked-out with a T-Mine Metzl had placed on it. He repeated this daring action three days later in a similar manner.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—date unavailable

ICI—date unavailable

2 Tank Destruction Badges—September 1942

Georg Michael – 2 kills

Leutnant d.R., Georg Michael served initially with the 6. *Trupp*, *Kav.Rgt. 6. Rittmeister* Michael, while commanding *II./Pz. Gren. Reg. 26*, was awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross for bravery and leadership ability on the Eastern Front. He was killed in action on January 19, 1944 in Russia.

Awards & Dates:

KC—January 19, 1941

Oakleaves to the KC—January 25, 1943



Georg Michael and Major Konrad Hupfer receive their Oakleaves from Hitler in January 1943.



Rittmeister Michael sometime in 1943.

J. Lukens

Georg Nietert – 5 kills

Niertert saw heavy combat in the closing months of WWII. He destroyed five tanks, and was awarded the Knight's Cross on February 10, 1945 for these actions while serving as an anti-tank gun crew chief with *14./G.R. 994*.



Georg Nietert.

Wilhelm Niggemeyer – 4 kills

Leutnant Niggemeyer destroyed two Soviet tanks single-handed and was awarded the Knight's Cross during heavy fighting southwest of Kaluga on the Eastern Front. At the time he was commander of *2./Pionier-Btl. 26/26. Inf. Div.* A few months later he would find himself in more fierce combat where he knocked out two enemy tanks and received the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.

Awards & Dates:

ICII—August 16, 1941

ICI—September 8, 1941

2 Tank Destruction Badges—August 25, 1942

2 Tank Destruction Badges—January 3, 1943

KC—September 18, 1942

Oakleaves to KC—May 17, 1943



Wilhelm Niggemeyer.

Wilhelm Osterhold – 3 kills

Major Wilhelm Osterhold was commander of *III./Füs. Reg. 27* when he was awarded the Knight's Cross. Less than a year later he was an *Oberstleutnant* in command of *Gren. Reg. 48* when he was awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–June 3, 1942

KC–March 26, 1944

Oakleaves to the KC–February 10, 1945

Hans Arno Ostermeier – 1 kill

As a leader of a *Kampfgruppe* (Battle Group) in *Pz. Gren.-Ausb. Reg.* (Training Rgt.) *Gleiwitz*/"*Pz. Gren. Div. "Feldherrnhalle,"* *Hauptmann* Hans Arno Ostermeier was awarded the Knight's Cross on August 23, 1944. He received the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross on April 15, 1945 as a *Major* in command of *Fallschirm-Panzergranadier-Regiment "Hermann Göring."*

Helmuth Ott – 2 kills

Oberleutnant d. R. Ott was awarded his Knight's Cross on November 16, 1943 as commander of *3./Grenadier Regiment 97*. He was awarded his two Tank Destruction Badges in Silver for actions in the Kuban Peninsula. Ott, like Gerhard Konopka, was a senior officer in the RAD, holding the rank of *Oberstfeldmeister*.

J. Lukens



Wilhelm Osterhold.



Hans Arno Ostermeier.



Helmuth Ott.

Walter Paulus – 2 kills

Leutnant d.R. Dr. Paulus was awarded the Knight's Cross on March 31, 1942 while serving as commander of 3./Pz.-Jäger Abt. 263.

Awards & Dates:

2 Tank Destruction Badges—dates unavailable

KC—March 31, 1942

Walter Paulus.
Note the
General
Assault
Badge
awarded
for 2
tanks
destroyed
prior to
insitution
of the
TDB.



Adolf Peichl – 11 kills

SS-Untersturmführer Peichl's reputation as a "lone fighter" and "Panzerknacker" was well founded. His close combat skills resulted not only in eleven enemy tanks destroyed to his credit, but also both the Wound Badge and the Close Combat Clasp in Gold. At the time of the award of the Knight's Cross in 1944 Peichl was a *SS-Hauptscharführer* and platoon leader of 12. Platoon/SS-Pz. Gren. Reg. 4 "Der Führer." Adolf Peichl died on June 4, 1969.

Awards & Dates:

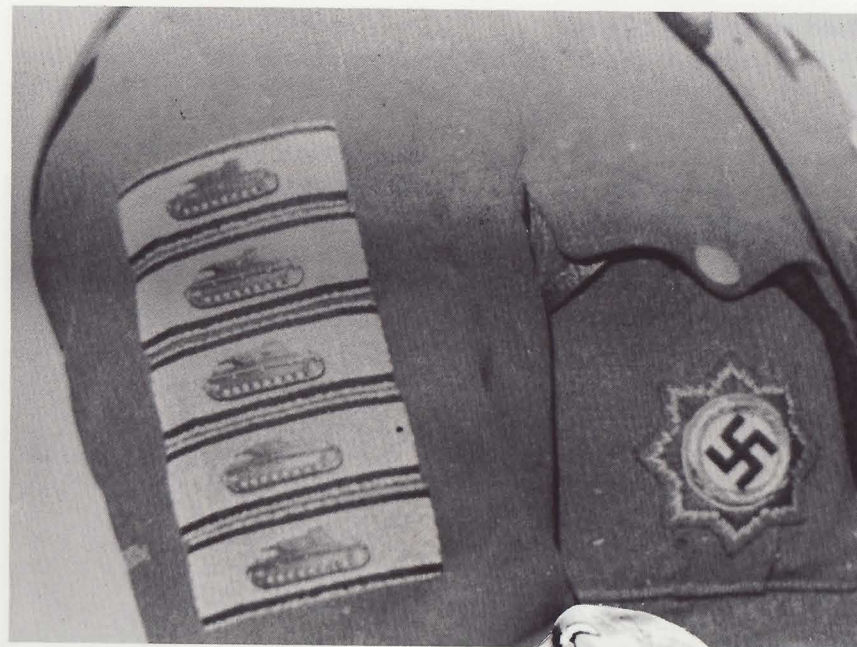
ICII—August 23, 1941

ICI—October 28, 1941

GC in Gold—September 16, 1943

Close Combat Clasp (Gold)—October 26, 1943

KC—October 16, 1944



This photo of Adolf Peichl's sleeve with five Tank Destruction Badges in Silver was taken on November 1, 1943. The photo at right was taken later when he wore one Tank Destruction Badge in Gold and one in Silver.



Joachim Peiper – 1 kill

SS-Standartenführer Peiper was awarded the Knight's Cross on March 9, 1943 as commander of *III.(gep)/2 Pz. Gren. Rgt. LAH*. In preparation for the attack on Kharkov he took possession of two bridgeheads which were decisive for the movement of advancing German forces. On July 12 as massed Soviet armor penetrated his line, Peiper was faced by a T-34. Waiting for a favorable moment, he climbed onto the turret, opened the hatch, and threw in a bundle of hand grenades. For this action he received a Tank Destruction Badge in Silver. This combat officer went on to earn the Close Combat Clasp in Silver, the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross as well as the Oakleaves and Swords. At war's end he had attained the rank of *SS-Standartenführer*.



Joachim Peiper, wearing one Tank Destruction Badge in Silver, is in the foreground. Behind him is Knight's Cross holder Werner Wolff.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–May 31, 1940

ICI–July 1, 1940

GC in Gold–May 6, 1943

KC–March 9, 1943

Tank Destruction Badge–July 24, 1943

Oakleaves to KC–January 27, 1944

Swords to KC w/Oakleaves–January 11, 1945

Erich Petermann – 3 kills

Oberfeldwebel and platoon leader in *4./Kradtschz. Btl. 64* Erich Petermann was awarded the Knight's Cross on August 17, 1942. He was killed in action on September 18, 1942, as a *Leutnant* in temporary command of his company during the advance on Stalingrad.



Erich Petermann.



T. McGuire

Peter Prien.

Peter Prien – 2 kills

Oberleutnant d.R. Prien was commander of the *Stabskp./2. Pz. Div.* and was awarded the Knight's Cross on May 9, 1945.

Emil Heinrich Rentschler – 2 kills

Hauptmann Rentschler was commander of the *III.Btl./Gren. Rgt. 537* when the Soviets broke through the defenses of the *387.Inf. Div.* and advanced to the Nowo Alexandrowka Line. During these critical battles on the Dnjepr, Rentschler displayed extraordinary courage and leadership and was awarded the Knight's Cross and two Tank Destruction Badges. He was later awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross during the bitter fighting on the Eastern Front in early 1945. At this time he was an *Oberstleutnant* and

commander of a regiment in the *547.Volks-Grenadier-Division* which was destroyed on February 12, 1945.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–June 27, 1940
 ICI–December 24, 1941
 GC in Gold–December 7, 1944
 KC–October 18, 1943
 Oakleaves to KC–March 14, 1945



Emil Heinrich Rentschler.

Adam Riedmüller – 2 kills

On February 2, 1945 five Soviet T-34 tanks attacked the German positions near Kunersdorf in East Prussia. *Feldwebel* Riedmüller destroyed two of them by using a *Panzerfaust*. The line was held and for this action he was awarded the Knight's Cross on February 8, 1945. At this time Riedmüller was serving with *4./Jagd-Pz.Abt. II (Pz.Gr.-Div. Kurmark)*.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–date unavailable
 ICI–date unavailable
 KC–February 8, 1945
 2 Tank Destruction Badges–February 2, 1945



Adam Riedmüller has just been awarded the Knight's Cross. Note that an Iron Cross IInd Class was used for this field decoration.

Georg Rietscher – 2 kills

Georg Rietscher was awarded the Knight's Cross in 1942 as a *Gefreiter* and gun aimer in the *14. Pz. Jag./513 Inf. Rgt./294. Inf. Div.* and the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross as an *Unteroffizier* in 1943. For the action which earned him the Oakleaves, he destroyed a T-34 with a Molotov cocktail while serving as a forward observer for his anti-tank company.

Awards & Dates:

KC–June 27, 1942
 Oakleaves to the KC–March 14, 1943



Georg Rietscher, during his posting to *Wachregiment Berlin* in 1943.

Hans Röger – 3 kills

Unteroffizier Röger was awarded the Knight's Cross while serving with *1./Pz. Füs. Reg. GD.*



Hans Röger.

T. McGuire

*All awards of the TDB were earned in East Prussia in Jan.-Feb. 1945.

Awards & Dates:

KC–September 21, 1944

Dr. Jur. Wolfgang Rust – 2 kills

Dr. Rust, as a *Hauptmann* and Adjutant in *Gren. Reg. 11 (mot.)* was awarded the Knight's Cross on June 24, 1944. On March 11, 1945, commanding *II./Gren. Reg. II*, he was awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.



J. Stone

SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff and Wolfgang Rust in Italy in 1944.



J. Stone

Fritz Sann – 1 kill

Major Sann was one of a handful of *Kriegsmarine* officers who was awarded the Knight's Cross while attached to the Army. He received his decoration on April 14, 1945 as commander of *Inf. Rgt. "Riedel/Inf. Div. "Pommern."* He was then put in command of the *Kriegsmarine's Marine Inf. Rgt. 8*. He also received the Close Combat Clasp in Silver and a single Tank Destruction Badge for his late war actions.



Fritz Sann.

Dieter Dingel



Emil Schareina.

Emil Schareina – 1 kill

OWM Emil Schareina was awarded the Knight's Cross on May 10, 1943, as acting company commander of *8./(MG)/Gren. Rgt. 24*.

Hans Schlott – 2 kills

No biographical data available.

J. Lukens



Jakob Schmitt.

Jakob Schmitt – 2 kills

When awarded the Knight's Cross, Jakob Schmitt was serving as an *Oberfeldwebel* and platoon leader *13.(Inf. Gesch.)/Gren. Reg. 485*. He was also awarded the German Cross in Gold; Close Combat Clasp in Silver and two Tank Destruction Badges.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–July 24, 1943

KC–September 30, 1944

Close Combat Clasp in Silver–date unavailable

2 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable



Wolfe-Hardin

Josef Schneider – 3 kills

Josef Schneider was awarded the Knight's Cross on June 27, 1942 as an *Oberfeldwebel der Reserve* and platoon leader in *11./Jäger-Rgt. 207/97. leichte Inf. Div.* During the second battle in the Nikopol bridgehead, Schneider, now a *Leutnant der Reserve*, and his men captured decisive heights and was later awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–July 27, 1941

ICI–September 10, 1941

2 Tank Destruction Badges–dates unavailable

KC–June 27, 1942

Oakleaves to KC–February 10, 1944



Josef Schneider.

O. Spornik Photo Coll.

Leopold Schrems – 3 kills

While serving as a squad leader in the Assault (HQ) Company/*Gebirgsjäger Reg. 85, 90th Pz. Gren. Div.* during a critical battle on the Italian front on May 27, 1944, *Obergefreiter* Schrems helped stop an Anglo-American tank force which was trying to break through his sector. Schrems' three daring attacks resulted in three tanks destroyed by his *Panzerfausts*, one at only 15 meters. For this action he was awarded the Knight's Cross

Awards & Dates:

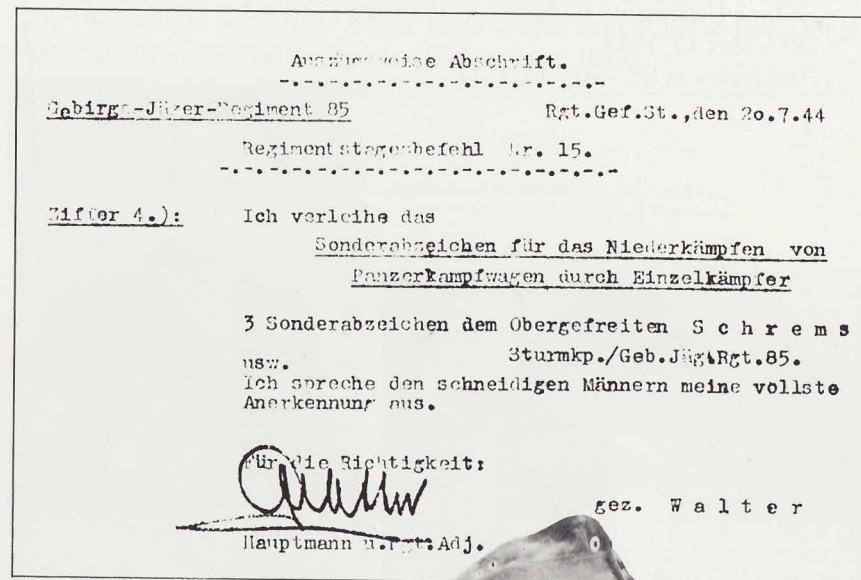
ICII–June 27, 1943

ICI–August 11, 1943

Close Combat Clasp (Bronze)–September 22, 1943

3 Tank Destruction Badges– July 20, 1944

KC–July 27, 1944



An acknowledgement document for Schrems' three Tank Destruction Badges dated July 20, 1944.

Leopold Schrems.



Johann Schwerdfeger – 2 kills

Johann Schwerdfeger was awarded the Knight's Cross in 1943 as a *Feldwebel* and platoon leader in *1./Jäger-Reg. 228, 101. Jäger Div.* One year later he was awarded the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross. During heavy

attacks on his unit's position, he was faced with several Soviet tank assaults. His fast thinking resulted in his destruction of two tanks.

Awards & Dates:

ICII-June 19, 1940

ICI-November 19, 1942

2 Tank Destruction Badges, 1 in 1943 and 1 in 1944

KC-May 17, 1943

Oakleaves to KC-May 14, 1944

Johann Schwerdfeger.



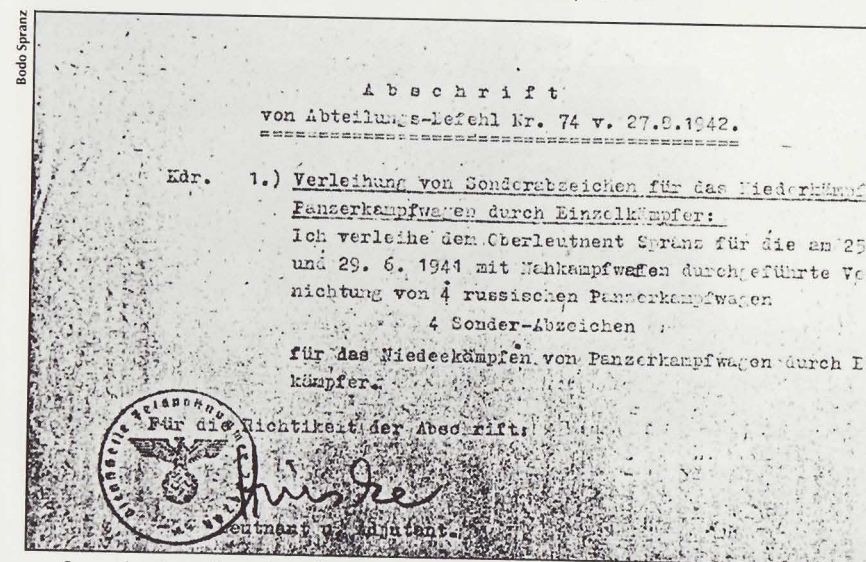
Hans Siegler.

Hans Siegler – 3 kills

Hans Siegler was awarded the Knight's Cross, ICI and three Tank Destruction Badges, all on the same day, August 12 1944, as a *Jäger* and machine-gun chief in 5./*Jäger-Reg.* 49. The photo shows Siegler on the day of his award, and is an excellent example of how the Tank Destruction Badges were pinned to the sleeve of the recipient. It was left up to the individual to permanently affix the badge to his tunic.

Bodo Spranz – 4 kills

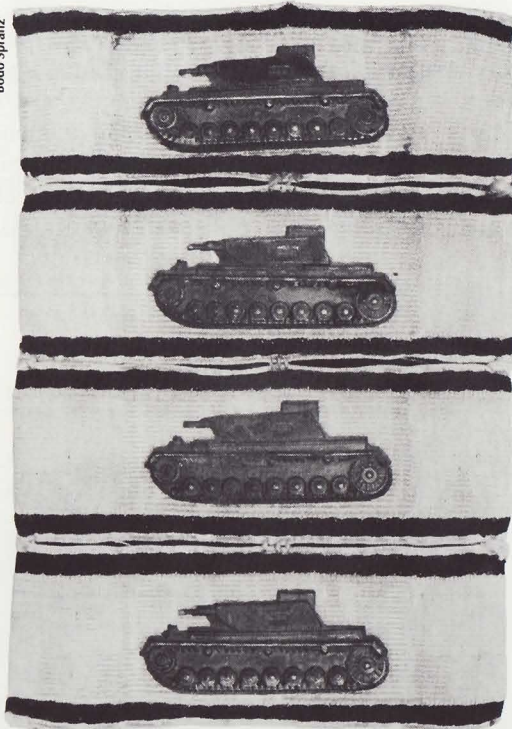
Bodo Spranz was awarded both the Knight's Cross and the Oakleaves (308th recipient) on October 3, 1943, while serving as an *Oberleutnant* and battery commander of 1./*St. Gesch. Brig.* 237. With simultaneous promotion to *Hauptmann*, retroactive awarding of the Tank Destruction Badge can be seen in the photo of his award certificate. The award certificate is dated Aug. 27, 1942, while the actions where he destroyed four Russian tanks single-handedly took place on the 25th and 29th of June, 1941.



Spranz's retroactive acknowledgement document for his four Tank Destruction Badges.



Spranz and General Lemelsen receive their Oakleaves from Hitler.



Four Tank
Destruction
Badges in Silver
belonging to Bodo
Spranz.



Eberhard Steinborn – 5 kills

Hauptmann d.R. Steinborn was awarded the Knight's Cross on July 11, 1944 while commander of *Pz.Zerst. Abt., Kampfgruppe D, (Pz.Jäg.Abt. 156).*



Eberhard Steinborn.



Stefan Strapatin.

Stefan Strapatin – 4 kills

SS-Rottenführer Strapatin, a telephone operator at the battalion H.Q., *II./49. SS-Freiw.Pz. Gren. Reg. "de Ruyter,"* was awarded the Knight's Cross in November 1944 for his having destroyed four enemy tanks single-handed.

Awards & Dates:

ICII–March 25, 1944

ICI–August 15, 1944

KC–November 16, 1944

Günther Viezenz – 21 kills

Oberleutnant Günther Viezenz, company commander of 10./Gren. Rgt. 7, was awarded the Knight's Cross on January 7, 1944. Much could be written about the courage of Günther Viezenz. He was, however, a very private man, and after several attempts on the part of this author to persuade him to describe his 21 tank kills failed, he was left to his well-deserved privacy. *Oberst (BW) a.D.* Günther Viezenz died on January 14, 1999.



Günther Viezenz.

Walter Voigt – 5 kills

After the award of his Knight's Cross on October 16, 1944, *Oberfeldwebel* Voigt was promoted to *Leutnant*. His skills earned him five Tank Destruction Badges. In the photo he wears five silver badges, long after the institution of the gold Tank Destruction Badge. When awarded the Knight's Cross, he was serving with 14./(Pz. Jag)/G.R. 31.

On one occasion, after being seriously wounded, *Oberfeldwebel* Voigt refused to be evacuated to the rear for treatment. Although weak from his wounds he left his cover and rushed a Soviet tank and put it out of action with

an improvised hand grenade bundle charge. *Leutnant a.D.* Voigt died on February 13, 1998.



Walter Voigt.

Alois Weber – 1 kill

Alois Weber was awarded the Knight's Cross as an *SS-Hauptscharführer* and platoon leader in 18. Kompanie/SS-Pz. Gren. Reg. "Deutschland." Attempts by this author for more historical data have been unsuccessful.

Awards & Dates:

GC in Gold–April 9, 1943

KC–July 30, 1943

J. Lukens



German Crosses are awarded to the members of the "Das Reich" Division on April 20, 1943. Alois Weber is second from left.

The following photos of unidentified recipients have been included for the reader's interest.



Knight's Cross holder Oberleutnant Müller is featured on the cover of "Hamburger Illustrierte."

This photo, published in the November 2, 1942 issue of "Signal," Nr. 22, shows one of the first badges awarded in the summer of 1942.



An unidentified Knight's Cross holder with two Tank Destruction Badges, with several other officers, is greeted by Hitler.

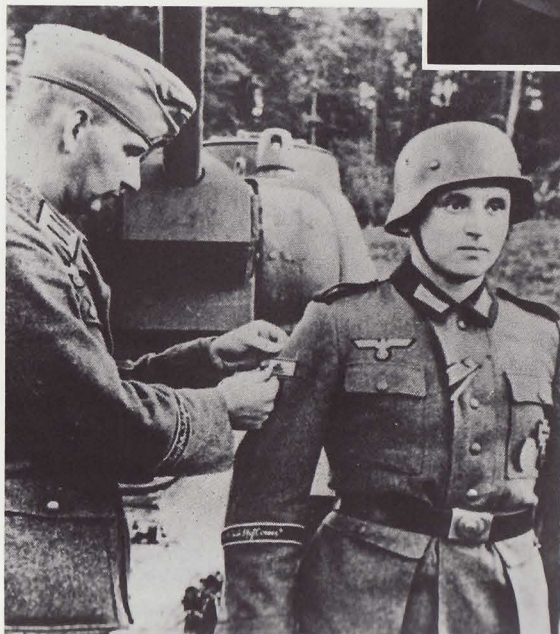


This paratrooper wears four Tank Destruction badges and a German Cross in Gold.

This January 1944 photo of a Panzer man with two Tank Destruction Badges is interesting in that the jacket collar is piped and the cap Soutache is still worn.



This NCO wears two Tank Destruction Badges and the Close Combat Clasp in Silver.

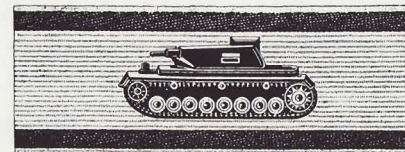


An engineer of *Pz. Pionier-Btl. "Grossdeutschland"* is awarded a Tank Destruction Badge for knocking-out a T-34 tank (June-July 1944).





An unidentified TDB recipient with a T-Mine 35.



Weapons



This section has been included as a partial reference for the reader's interest. Since this is not a book on weapons, only a photo and a brief description of some of the most widely used anti-tank devices are offered.

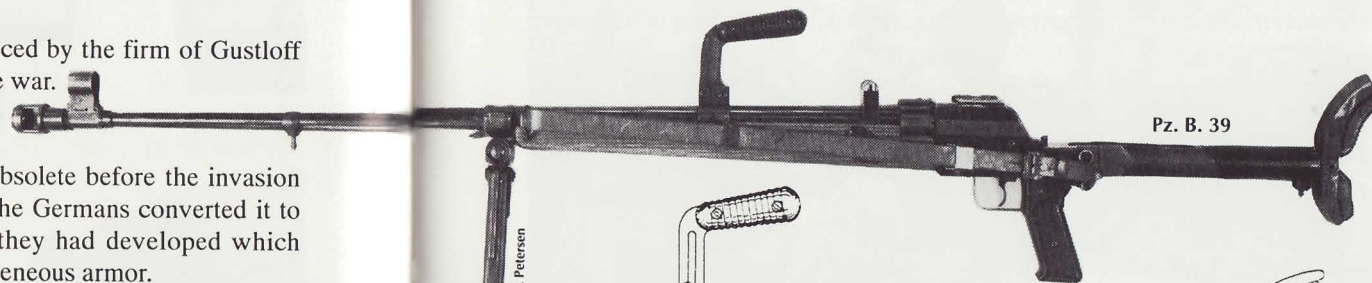
Anti-Tank Rifles

1. **Pz. B. 39:** This 7.92mm weapon was produced by the firm of Gustloff Werks and was used in the early years of the war.

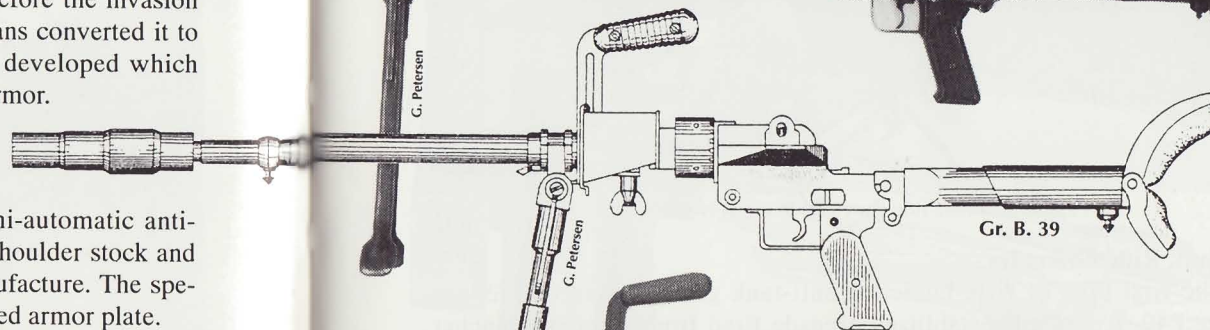
2. **Gr. B. 39:** The Pz. B. 39 was considered obsolete before the invasion of France. Rather than scrap this weapon, the Germans converted it to fire a wide variety of anti-tank grenades they had developed which were capable of penetrating 4.96" of homogeneous armor.

3. **Pz. B. 40k:** Krieghoff developed this 7.92mm, semi-automatic anti-tank rifle. Early versions of this weapon utilized the shoulder stock and bipod from the MG34 machine gun to simplify manufacture. The special bullet was capable of penetrating 1" thick hardened armor plate.

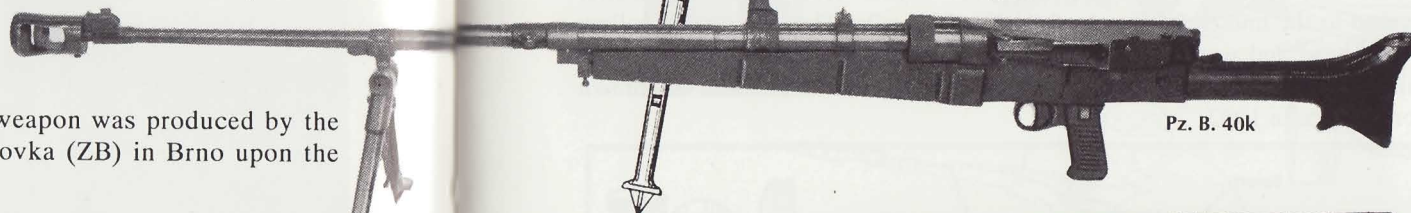
4. **MPz. B. 41:** This futuristic-looking weapon was produced by the Czech firm of Ceskoslovenska Zbrojovka (ZB) in Brno upon the request of the *Waffen-SS*.



Pz. B. 39



Gr. B. 39

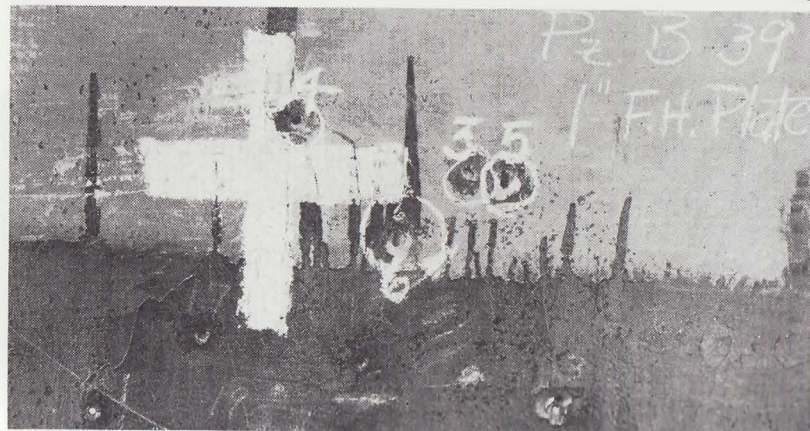


Pz. B. 40k



Round for an anti-tank rifle.

G. Petersen

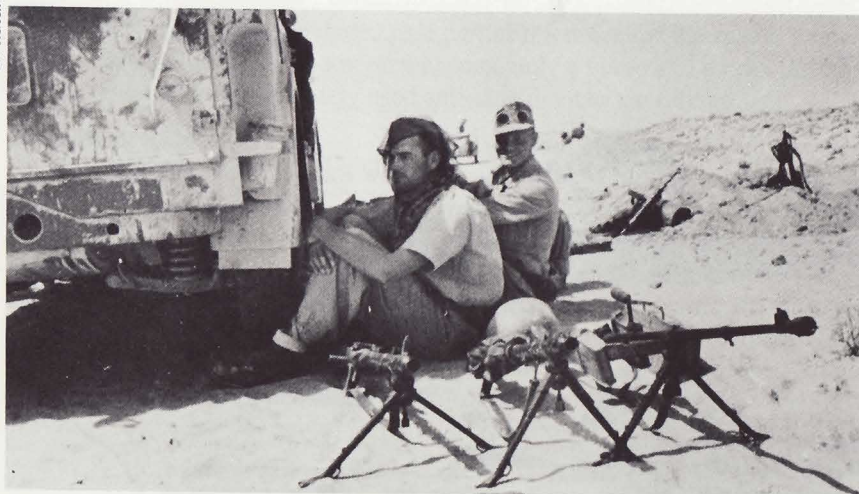


This photo shows damage done to a 1" thick piece of hardened armor plate by a high-velocity 8mm bullet. Of the numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6, only #4 penetrated the armor.



MPz. B. 41

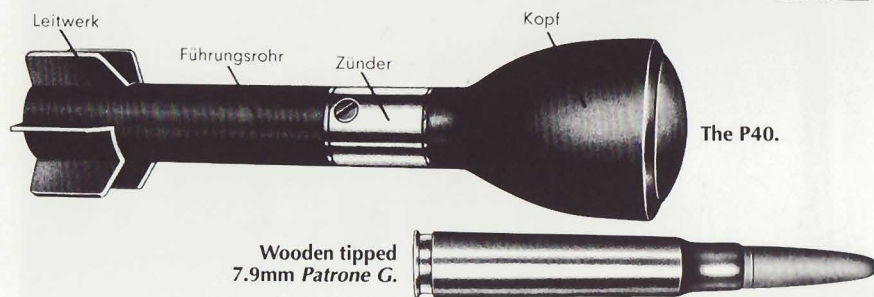
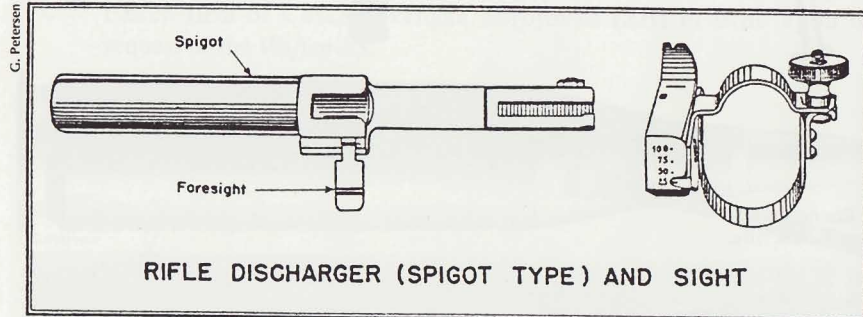
G. Petersen



The Pz.B.39 anti-tank rifle (far right) in use in North Africa.

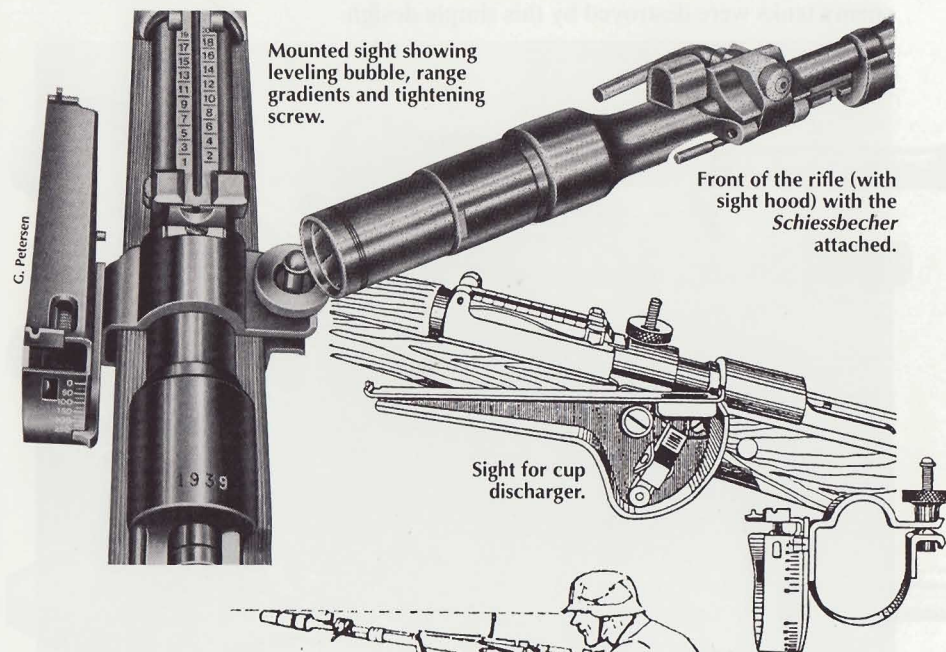
Anti-Tank Rifle Grenades

The first type of rifle-launched anti-tank grenade was the *Schuss Granate* P40. It was a fin-stabilized grenade fired from a spigot launcher secured to the muzzle of the standard Kar 98K rifle. The P40 used a hollow charge head and was launched by firing a special cartridge with a wooden bullet. It was first issued in 1941 but was not successful and was withdrawn from service in 1942.

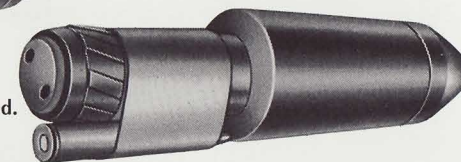


In 1943, the spigot launcher was replaced by an internally rifled launcher cup (*Schiessbecher*) which was also secured to a rifle muzzle. A variety of grenades could be fired, to include hollow charge projectiles intended primar-

ily for anti-tank use. The *Gewehr-Panzergranate 30* had a fairly short range and its relatively small TNT charge made it ineffective in most cases. It was superseded by larger grenades with greater bursting charges. The *Schiessbecher* system, which included a sight with a leveling bubble, was considered expensive to produce especially when considering its limited effectiveness.



Grosse Gewehr-Panzergranate with propelling cartridge attached.



G. Petersen

Panzerfaust/Faustpatrone 60m

Introduced in early 1944, the *Panzerfaust 60m* was probably the most effective of the *Panzerfaust* models, which included the 30 Km, 30m, 60m, 100m, and the 150m. The number 60m means the fighting range in meters. The *Panzerfaust* was a highly effective anti-tank weapon and thousands of enemy tanks were destroyed by this simple design.



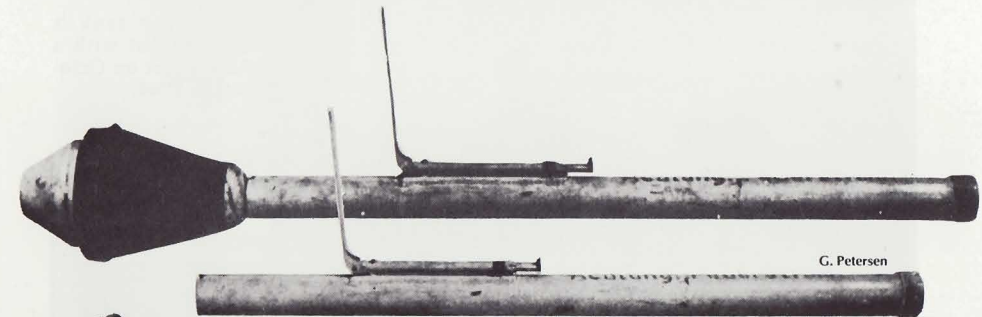
This *Füsilier* of the "Grossdeutschland" Division crouches at the entrance to his bunker armed with a *Panzerfaust 30m*.



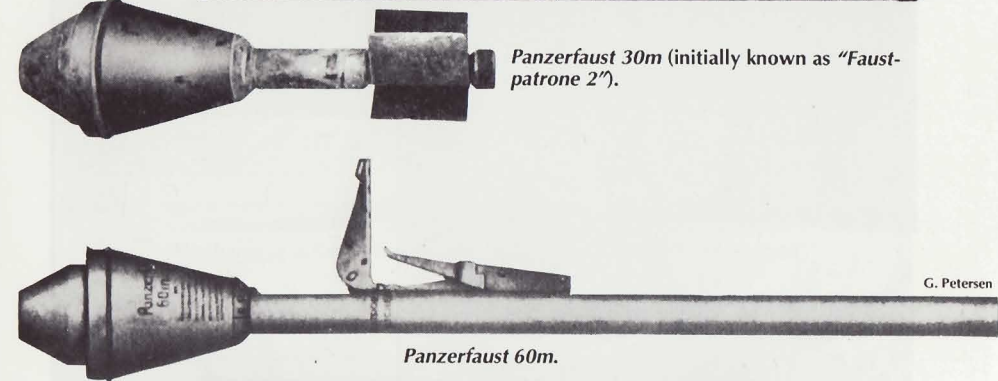
The *Panzerfaust 60m* in action on the Western Front.



Panzerfaust klein 30 ("Faustpatrone 1" or "Gretchen").



Panzerfaust 30m (initially known as "Faustpatrone 2").



Panzerfaust 60m.



Warhead of a *Panzerfaust 60m*.

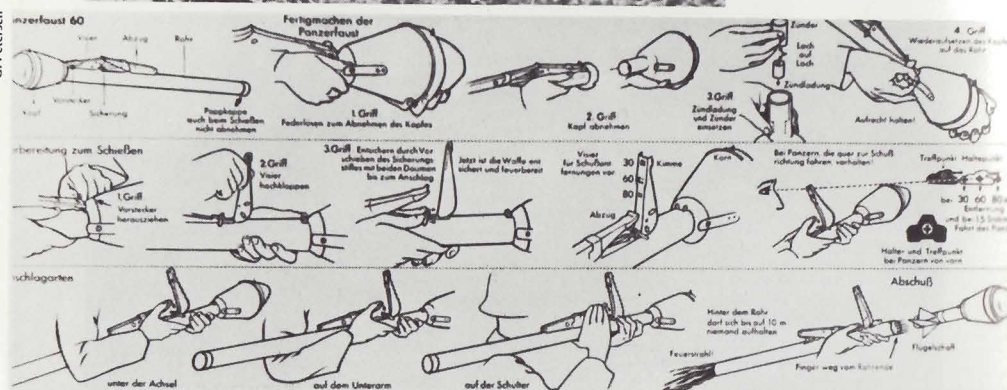


A Sherman tank is knocked-out with a *Panzerfaust* on October 30, 1944.

G. Petersen



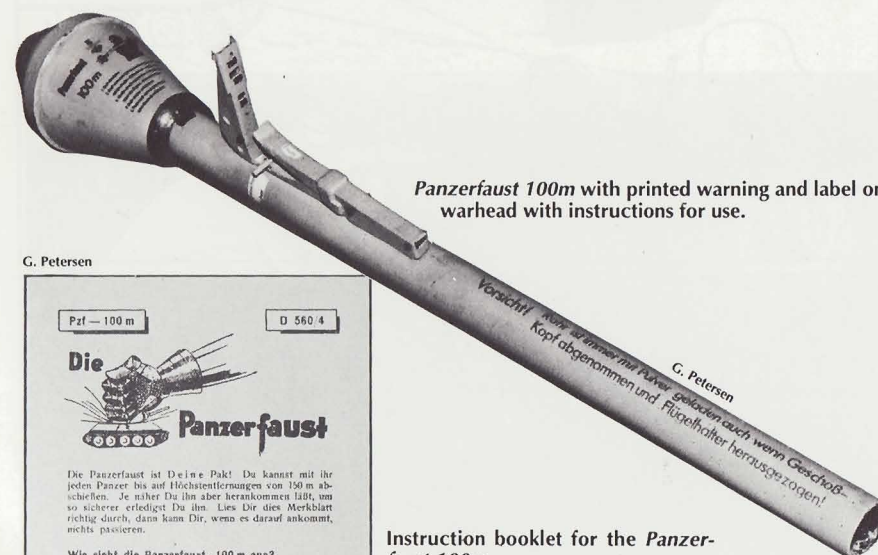
Instruction booklet
for the *Panzerfaust*
60m.



Mut und Panzerfaust besiegen jeden Panzer



Discharge of a *Panzerfaust* during a dark Silesian evening in late 1944.



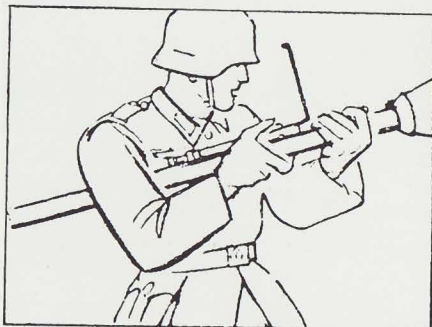
Panzerfaust 100m with printed warning and label on warhead with instructions for use.

G. Petersen



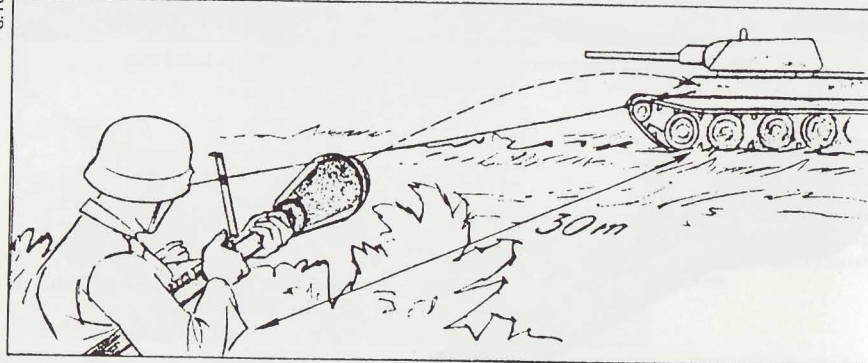
Instruction booklet for the *Panzerfaust 100m*.

Note the explosive head for the more modern and improved Panzerfaust 150.



The Panzerfaust could be held under the right arm when aiming or on the shoulder, with the left hand positioned approximately 5cm behind the front edge of the tube.

G. Petersen



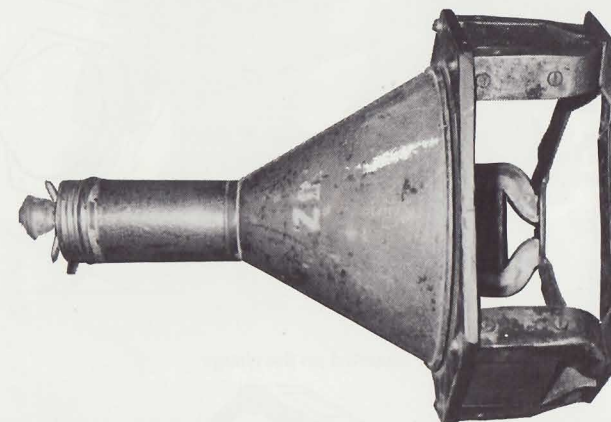
G. Petersen



Party leaders in the Volkssturm marching in Berlin in early 1945.

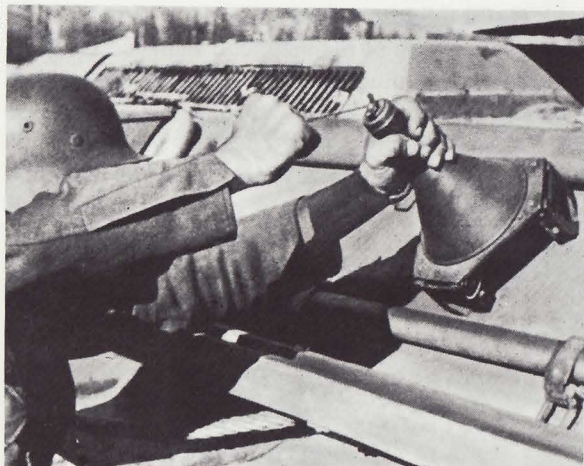
Magnetic Anti-Tank Charge/Hafthohlladung 3 kg

This was probably the most common of the magnetic charges used during the war. Others ranged from 2 to 10 kilograms in weight and were either too light or too heavy for effectiveness. The 3 kg proved to be one of the most potent anti-tank weapons used against enemy armor. The Germans were well aware of the effectiveness of the magnetic charges, which led to the development of a special antimagnetic coating called *Zimmerit* paste, for application to their own tanks. This was a wasted effort, however, as the Allies never developed a magnetic charge. When placed by hand, the 3 kg had a seven-second igniter, allowing time to escape before detonation. If thrown at a target, a 4-1/2 second igniter was available.

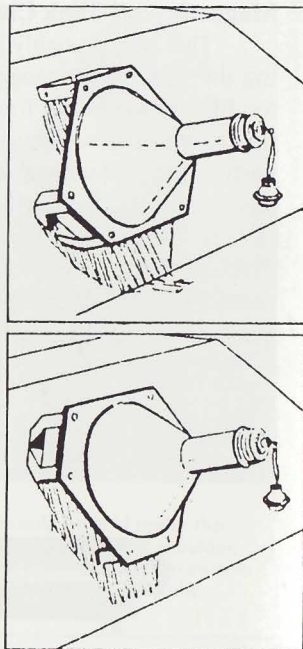


Bob Decker

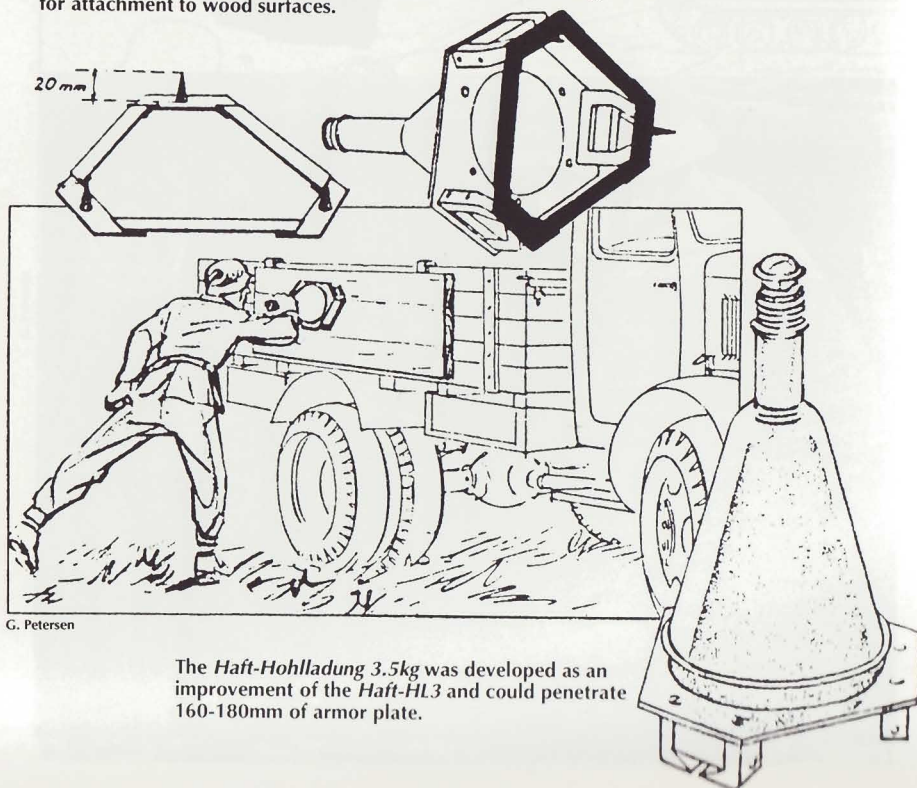




Above: Activating the fuse. Top right: The wrong position of the magnetic feet. Right: The proper positioning of the magnetic anti-tank charge. Note that it is positioned as in photo above.



A ring with three 20mm spikes could be mounted on the charge for attachment to wood surfaces.



G. Petersen

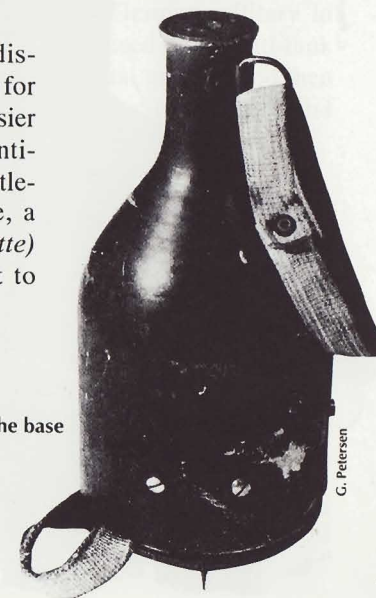
The Haft-Hohlladung 3.5kg was developed as an improvement of the Haft-HL3 and could penetrate 160-180mm of armor plate.



Moving against Soviet tanks armed with 3 kg magnetic anti-tank charges.

Tank Hand Mine 3/Panzerhandmine 3

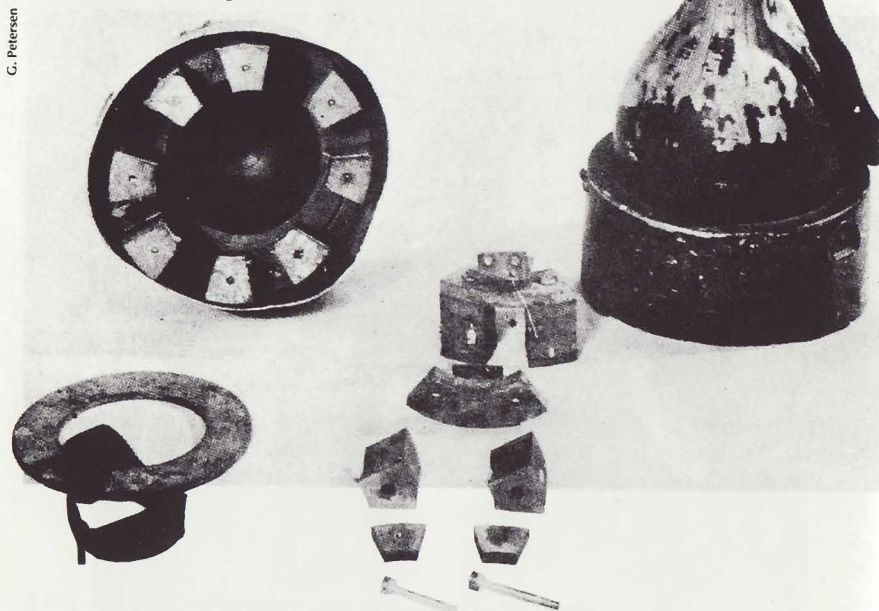
This mine is similar to the previously discussed 3 kg charge. It was specially designed for the paratroopers and had a carrying strap for easier transportation. Since it was specifically for anti-tank warfare it had eight magnets within the bottle-shaped casing. In contrast to the 3 kg charge, a round plate with three small spikes (*Dornplatte*) could be mounted on the base for attachment to wooden objects.



Note the ring with spikes on the base of this Panzerhandmine 3.

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At left is a *Panzerhandmine 3* with four sets of magnets, and below it the round base plate. At right is a *Panzerhandmine 4*.



Tank Hand Mine 4/Panzerhandmine 4

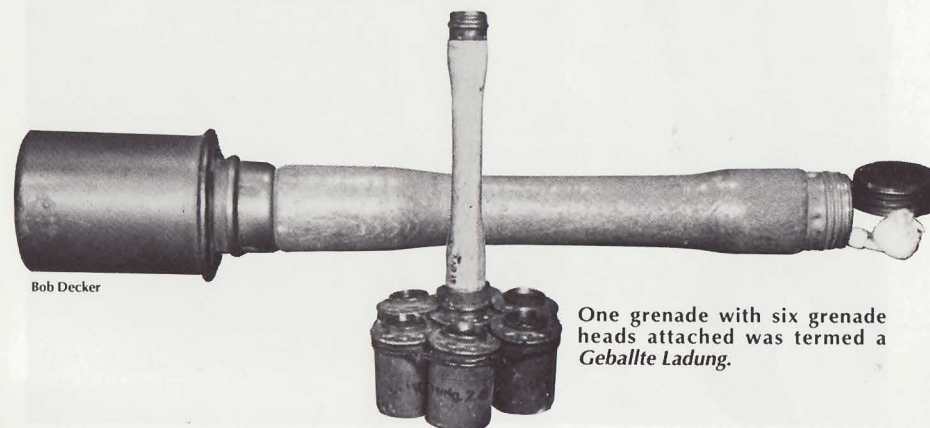
This weapon contained a 4 kg charge making it particularly effective. It was compact in shape, had a longer fuse and only three sets of magnets instead of four. It could penetrate 15cm of armor plate.



A paratrooper armed with a *Panzerhandmine 4*.

Stick grenade/Steilhandgranate STG 39

This was the standard hand grenade used by the German military in WWII. It had an effective range of thirty yards. To be used as an anti-tank weapon, six of the grenade heads were lashed to one central grenade and then thrown or placed. This proved to be very effective against Soviet armor and was later used on the Western Front against American and British tanks.

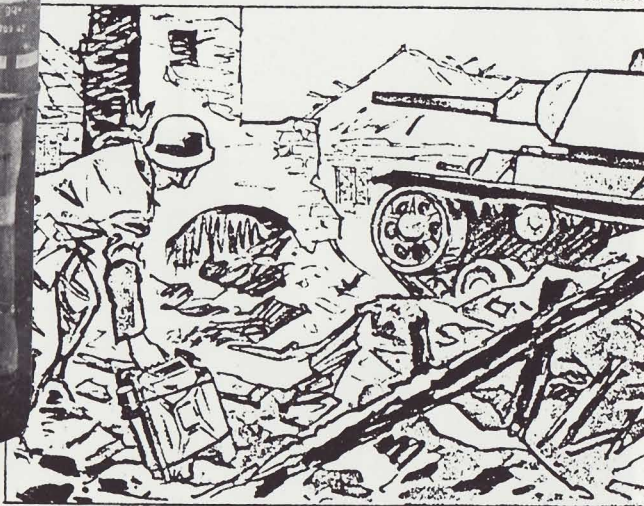


One grenade with six grenade heads attached was termed a *Geballte Ladung*.



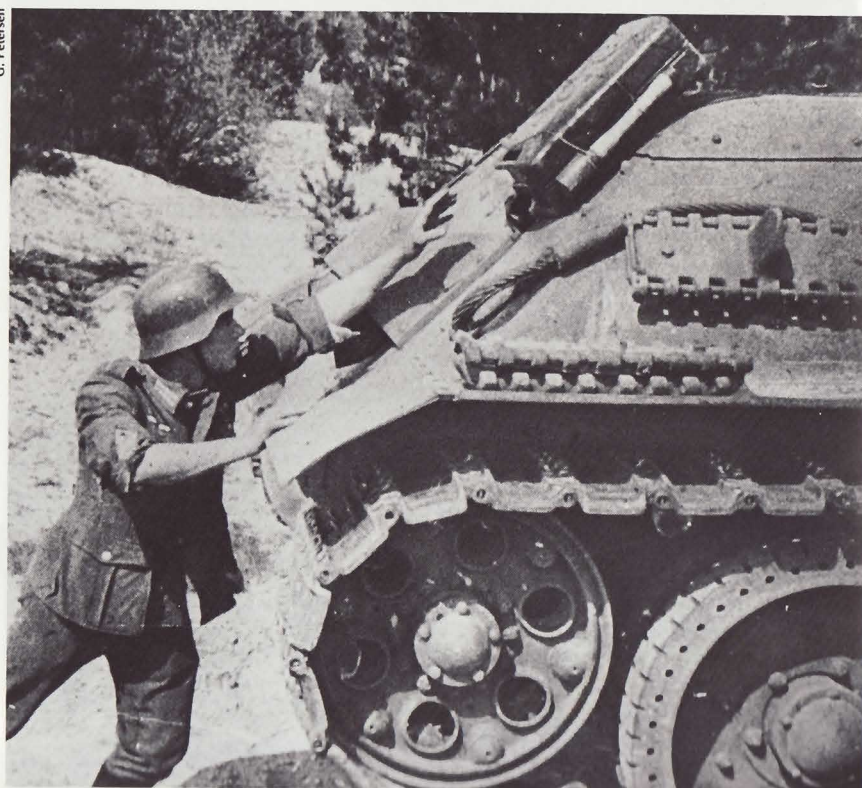
Another effective anti-tank weapon consisted of a stick grenade attached to a "Jerry" can which was then placed on the target vehicle.

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Vehicle drivers and members of supply services were expected to engage enemy tanks which had broken through the lines. A 3/4 full can of gasoline with a hand grenade attached was the most expedient weapon available to these troops in such a situation. In fact, each driver was to have such a weapon already constructed and stored in his vehicle.

G. Petersen



G. Petersen

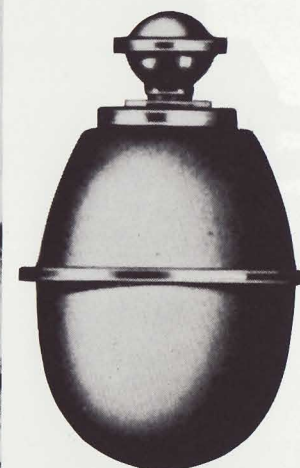


This soldier places a STG 39 near the engine compartment of a Soviet T-34.

Egg grenade/Eihandgranate 39

Yet another hand grenade which was also adapted for the anti-tank fighting role. This was accomplished by again lashing six "egg" grenades to a STG 39 stick grenade and was used in the same way as an effective bundle charge. This charge was used on all fronts during the war, claiming many Allied tanks and other armored vehicles.

Rene Smeets



G. Petersen

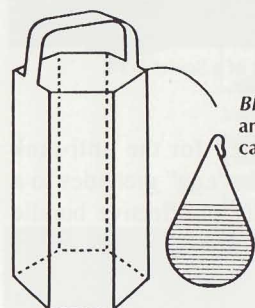
Egg-shaped hand grenade M1939.

Glass Smoke Grenade 1H & 2H/Blendkörper 1H und 2H

The enlogated glass grenades contained a smoke-generating liquid which was activated when thrown with force at a target. The smoke is produced by hydrolysis of titanium tetrachloride. If properly thrown, the dense acidic smoke would temporarily blind the enemy crew forcing them to halt their vehicle. This permitted a tank-killing team or individual the opportunity to close in on the vehicle and knock it out.

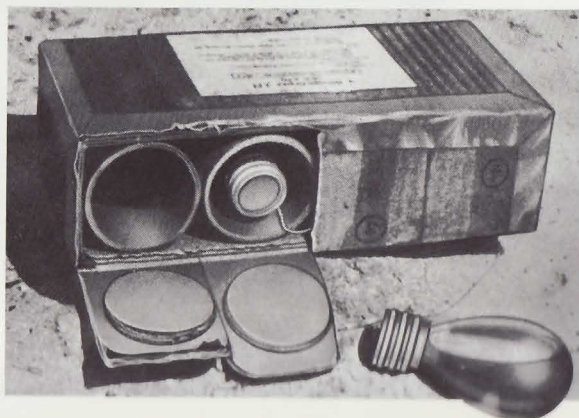
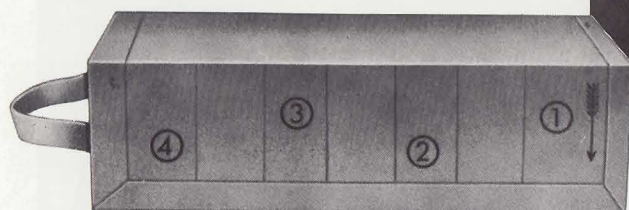
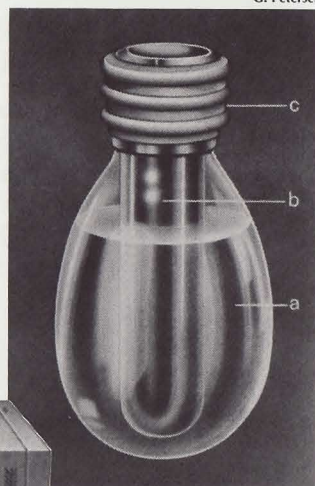
The 1H tended to be unstable and was therefore packed individually. It was replaced with the 2H soon after its introduction. Both had glass bodies, but the 2H had a central glass tube which held a solution (calcium chloride) which allowed water to react with the titanium tetrachloride and produce a smoke cloud in the desert or in cold areas where low humidity slowed the reaction. It also lowered the freezing point to 40 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. The 2H was issued in a cardboard box with separate compartments for each of the four grenades.

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Blendkörper 1H
and protective
carton.

Blendkörper 2H
a. Outer container
b. Inner tube
c. Cap of cementing
material



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Shortly
before
the
throw.



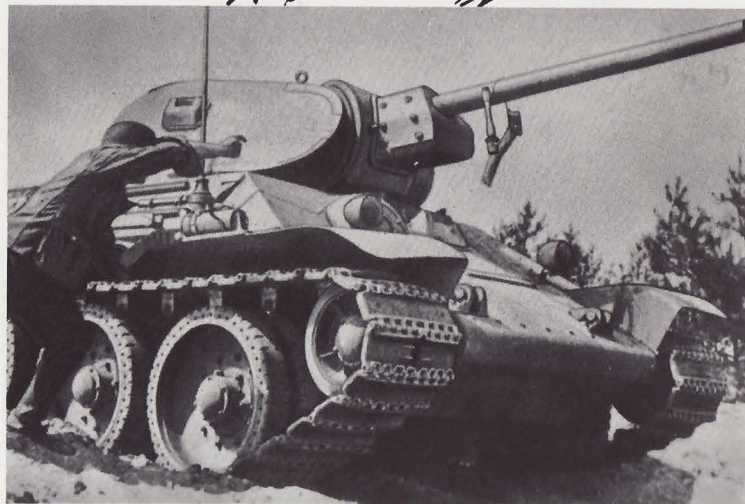
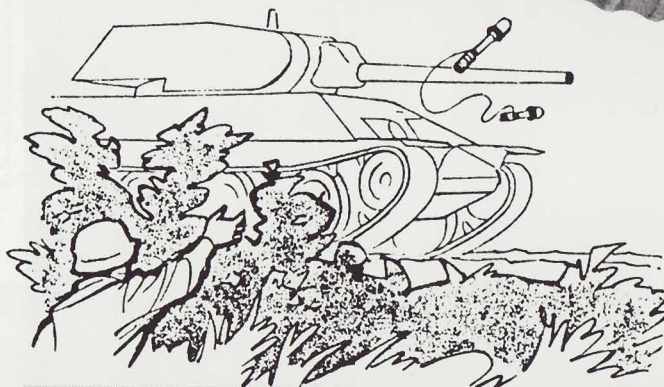
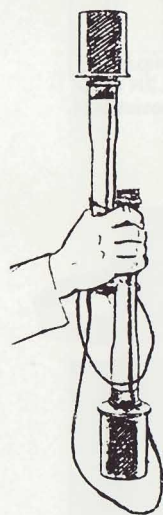
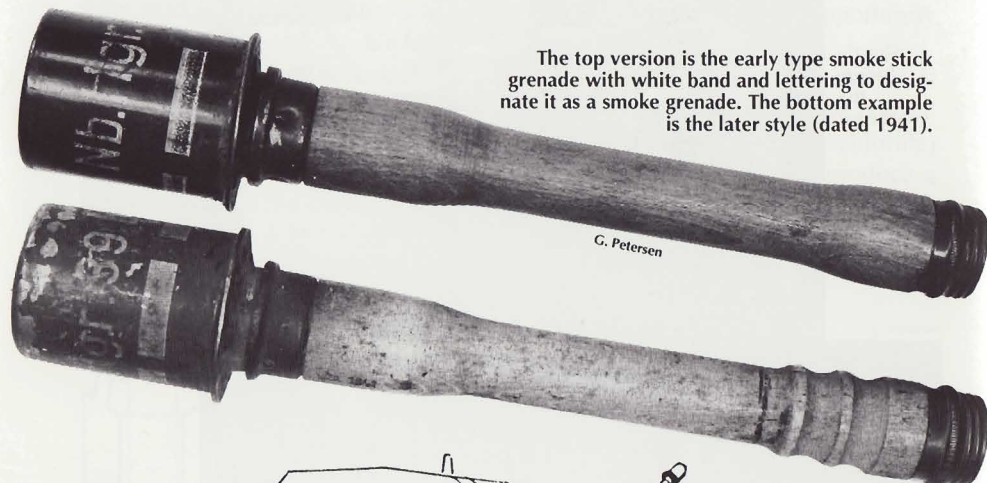
Impact of
a 2H on a
Soviet T-34.

The
irritation
of the
smoke
forces
the crew
to abandon
their
vehicle.



Smoke Stick Grenade 39/Nebelhandgranate 39

This grenade was also used to obscure enemy observation. The basic configuration was as that of the M24 stick grenade, but with holes around the base of the head from which the smoke escaped. It was distinguished from the explosive version by three grooves around the handle (for recognition at



night), by a white band around the center of the handle, and by a white band around the head—the latter being interrupted by the inscription “Nb.Hgr.39” in white Latin letters.

For anti-tank warfare, two smoke grenades were tied together with a 2 meter long cord, which could be thrown from a short distance and wrapped around the cannon barrel of a tank. The smoke from these grenades would obstruct the driver's view.

8.8cm Raketenpanzerbüchse 43 and 54 (Ofenrohr or Panzerschreck)

The Germans were so impressed with the American-made bazooka that they decided to produce an equivalent as soon as possible. They ultimately produced an anti-tank rocket launcher with an effective range of 150 meters. Used on all fronts by ground forces, the *Panzerschreck* proved to be a very effective tank killer.



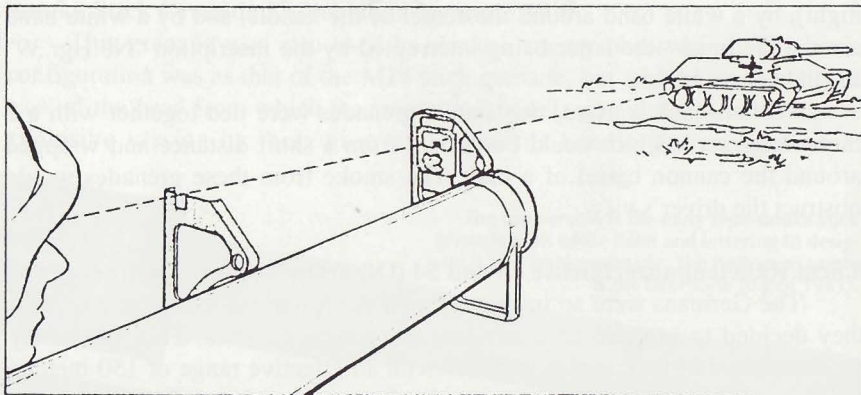
Raketenpanzerbüchse 43.



This paratrooper carries a RPzB 43 during the Normandy battles. A later version, the RPzB 54 below, was introduced in 1944. It was fitted with a shield to protect the crew from blow-back and a leather carrying strap was added.



Raketenpanzerbüchse 54.



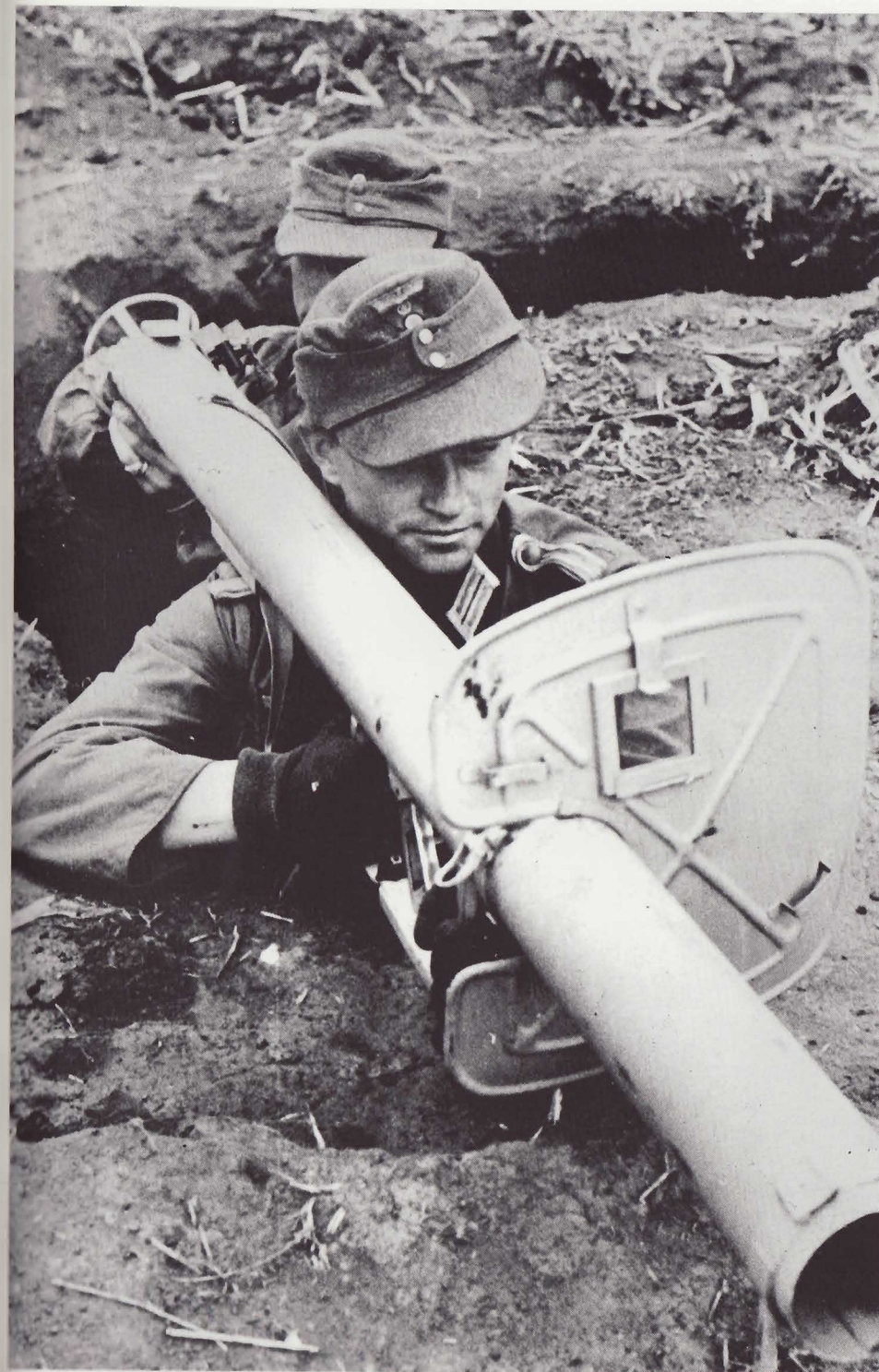
Sighting with the *Raketenpanzerbüchse 43* at 120 meters.



The blow-back of the *Raketenpanzerbüchse 43* without protective shield was so great that the operator was to wear protective clothing. As an improvisation he could wear his gas mask without filter, a hood using his gas cape, a scarf, and gauntlets.



Right: This *Leutnant* is shown aiming the RPzB54 with protective shield. Note the trench which is protection for the loader. ➡





The RPzB 54 in action.



Summer ammunition.

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Winter ammunition.

Two versions of the RPzBGr 4322 hollow-charge, armor-piercing missiles.

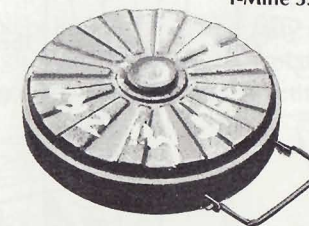
Tellermine 35, 35 (Stahl), 42 and 43

All of these anti-tank mines could be used to knock out Allied armor by hand as well as by placing them in the ground, which was their intended use. The tank fighter had to place a T-mine at a weak spot on a tank in order to produce the blast effect required to disable the vehicle.

T-Mine 35.



T-Mine 35 (Stahl).



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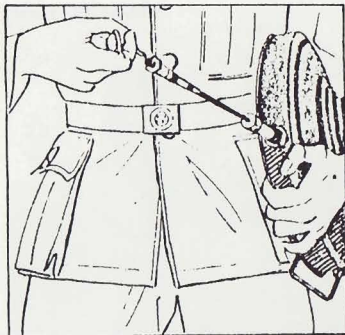
T-Mine 42.



T-Mine (Pilz) 43.

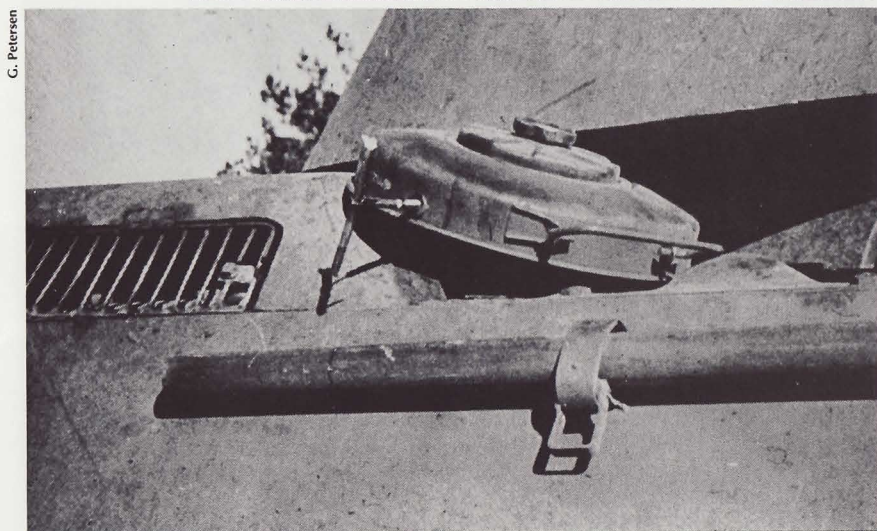


This unidentified soldier wearing a single Tank Destruction Badge trains his young comrades in the art of becoming a *Panzerknacker*.

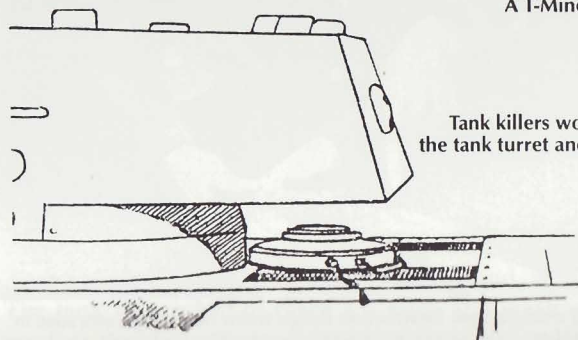


The mine's fuse is activated.

With practice, a mine with a timed detonator could be hurled on or below the hull of the tank disabling it.



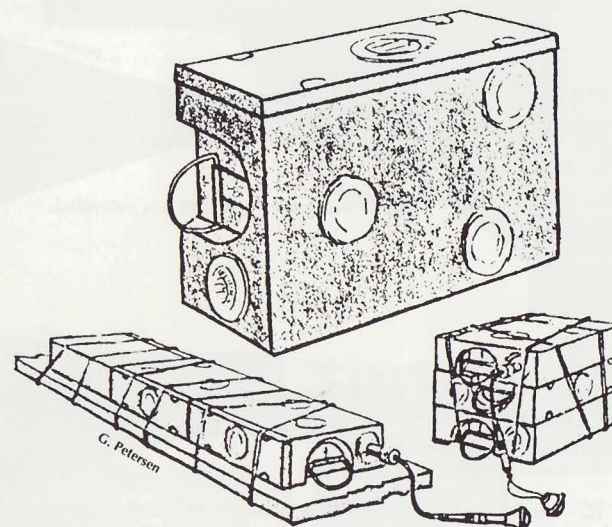
A T-Mine 42 positioned on a Soviet tank.



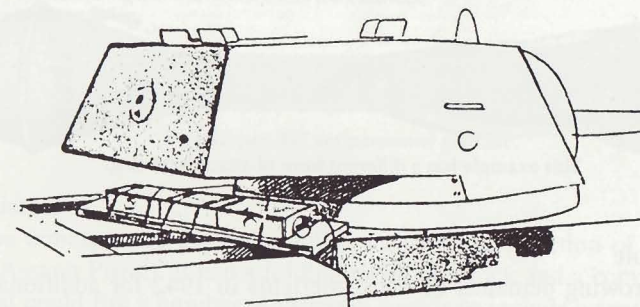
Tank killers would try to place a mine between the tank turret and the hull. If properly positioned the turret could be blown off.

The 3kg Charge/3-kg Ladung

The 3kg charge was used by tank hunters in much the same way as with mines. The penetrating power was through 60-80mm of armor plate. If a stronger charge was required multiple charges could be mounted together.



These bound-together 3kg charges have been fitted with timed detonators.

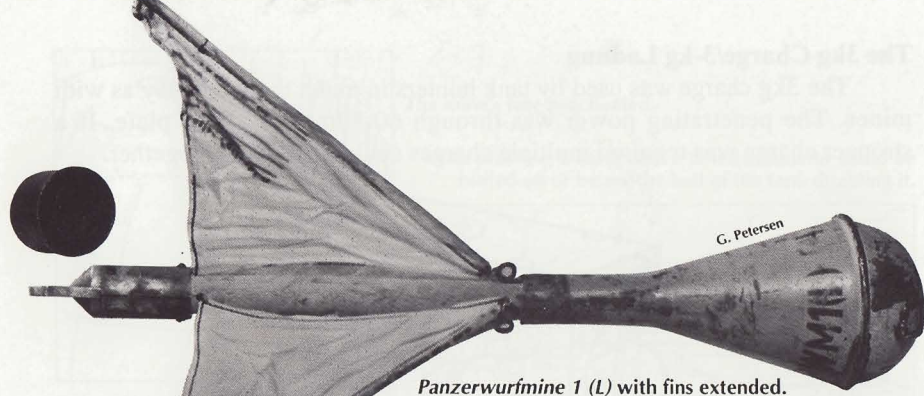


As with mines, positioning of the multiple charges between the turret and the hull would have the most devastating effect.

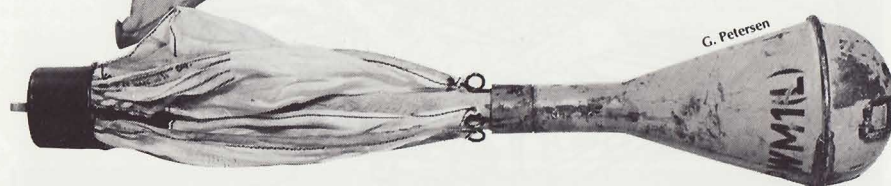
Panzerwurfmine 1 (L) kurz

This late war weapon was used in a limited capacity. It had a metal body to which were attached four canvas fins on a wooden handle. The hand-held mine was thrown at a tank or armored fighting vehicle, often to good effect.

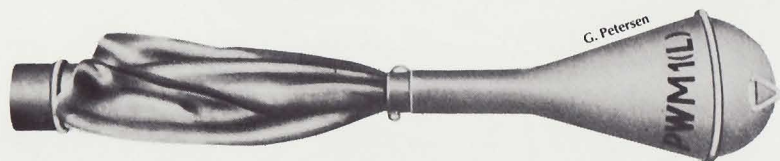




Panzerwurfmine 1 (L) with fins extended.



Panzerwurfmine 1 (L) - (literal translation: anti-tank throwing mine). It is shown with fins in folded position and end cap in place. The ring on the head was for attachment to field equipment.



This example has a different form of attachment ring.

Kampfpistole

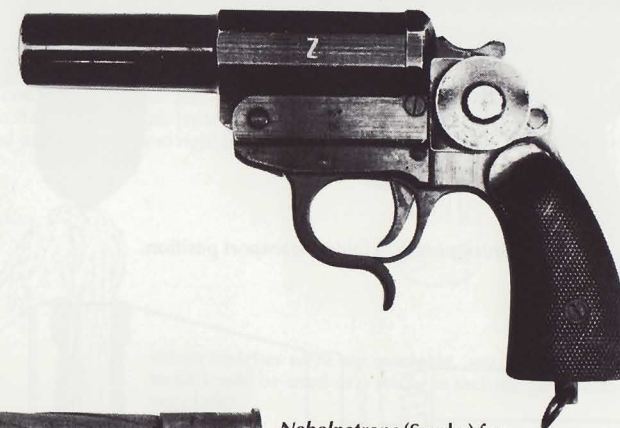
The growing demands of the battlefields in 1942 for additional close-support weapons prompted several emergency solutions. One of these was a special, small, high explosive grenade to be fired from the standard flare pistol. To accommodate this grenade the flare pistol was fitted with a rifled barrel and a simple dial sight. This converted flare pistol was designated *Kampfpistole* (Battle Pistol). Besides the HE rounds, it could also fire smoke, indicator and illumination rounds.

The flare pistol was also adopted to fire two types of small antipersonnel grenades; one being similar to a standard flare and the other a *Wurfkörper 361*, which required a special smooth bore liner when fired.

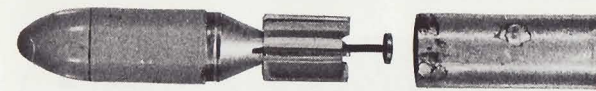


Illustration of a high explosive round for the *Kampfpistole* (*Sprenggranatpatrone*).

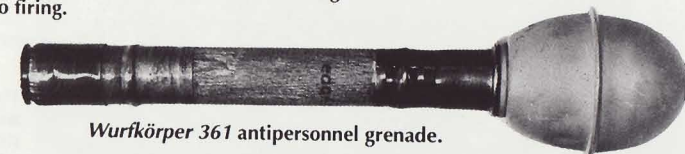
The *Kampfpistole*. Note the luminous "Z" designation indicating a rifled barrel and the round sight on the left side, which was graduated in degrees and had a spirit level to determine angle of barrel for grenade fire. This example was made by AYF (Erma, Erfurt) in 1942.



Nebelpatrone (Smoke) for use against enemy tanks to blind crew members.



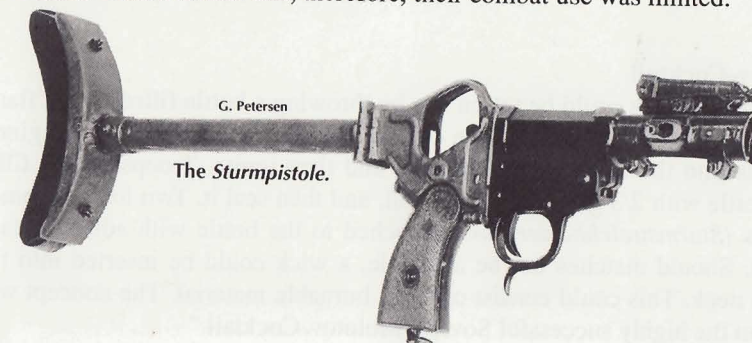
Wurfgrenatpatrone 326 (HE Grenade 326) with six stabilizing fins which fitted into the cartridge prior to firing.



Wurfkörper 361 antipersonnel grenade.

Sturmpistole

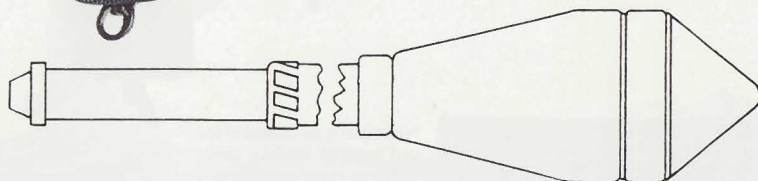
The concept was expanded upon with the introduction of the *Sturmpistole* (Assault Pistol). It had a folding metal buttstock and a complex bubble sight, and could fire a number of different rounds to include a special antitank round known as the *Panzerwurfkörper 42*. A steel liner could be removed from the barrel allowing the normal range of flares to be fired. The grenades fired from the *Kampfpistole* and *Sturmpistole* were not explosively strong enough to have much effectiveness and, therefore, their combat use was limited.



The *Sturmpistole*.



Sturmpistole in folded/transport position.



The *Panzerwurfkörper 42* (Anti-tank Grenade 42) for use with the *Sturmpistole*.



The *Sturmpistole* with shoulder-stock is loaded with a *Panzerwurfkörper 42*.

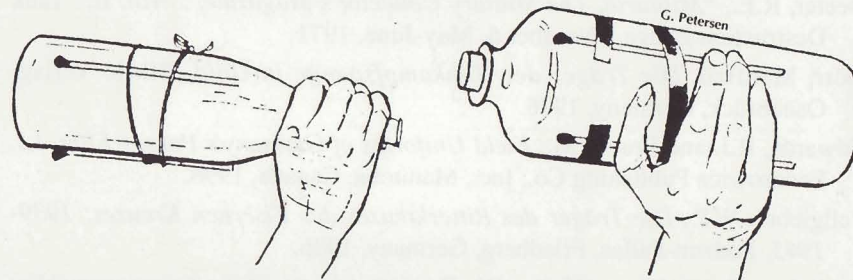
Molotov-Cocktail

Enemy tanks could be set on fire by throwing a bottle filled with a flammable liquid against the hull. The contents would flow through the engine's air vents into the engine compartment, and then ignite. Troops would fill a glass bottle with $\frac{2}{3}$ gasoline and $\frac{1}{3}$ oil, and then seal it. Two long-stemmed matches (*Sturmstreichhölzer*) were attached to the bottle with adhesive tape or cord. Should matches not be available, a wick could be inserted into the bottle's neck. This could consist of light, burnable material. The concept was based on the highly successful Soviet "Molotov-Cocktail."

Any bottle could be used as an anti-tank weapon once filled with a flammable liquid. Note how the matches are attached to the middle and right bottles with tape.



When matches were not available, any burnable material could be used as a wick, to include gun-cleaning cloths.



The makeshift weapon could be thrown by the neck of the bottle or its center of gravity. In training to use such weapons, a distance of 30 meters was the recommended throwing distance providing factors were in the favor of the attacker, i.e., good cover and no supporting infantry.

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