



# **ONCE I HAD A COMRADE: Karl Roth and the Combat History of the 36th Panzer Regiment 1939-45**

*R Byrd*

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Once I Had a Comrade is the story of the author's German father-in-law, Karl Roth, who grew up during the tumultuous 1930s in the Franconian town of Schweinfurt, located in northern Bavaria, and of his regiment, 36th Panzer Regiment. When the Second World War began, he found himself conscripted into the army and assigned as maintenance private to the headquarters company of Schweinfurt's new branch of service, the 36th Panzer Regiment, assigned to 4th Panzer Division until November 1940, 14th Panzer Division thereafter. They participated in the campaigns in Poland 1939, France 1940 and Yugoslavia 1941, before serving on the Eastern Front (southern sector) until destruction at Stalingrad 1943. The division was then rebuilt and again served in the southern sector of Russia before being transferred to Kurland in late 1944, where it saw out the rest of the war serving with 18th Army. During these campaigns, Karl Roth repaired nearly every type of tank in the German arsenal, holding the rank of master sergeant by the end of the war. After six years of conflict he survived being blown off his tank, dysentery, malaria, weeks separated behind enemy lines, a possible court-martial, and was awarded the Gold Tank Destruction Badge. As Richard Byrd began to research the story, several questions arose about the unit and his father-in-law, including: What kind of man was he? Where did he fight and what tactics were used? Why wasn't a regimental history written after the war? What was their strength and what strategic events affected them? Many of the answers to these questions were supplied by books, but more important than all the numbers and statistics gathered for the research were the first hand accounts related to him by his mother-in-law and survivors of the regiment, who have provided a host of original photographs and anecdotes explaining the human aspect of the 36th Panzer Regiment's history.

This book then is a tribute to Roth and his comrades, and to all soldiers who aspire to commendable and honorable action during time of war. Key sales points: Provides the first history of 36th Panzer Regiment yet published in any language / Combines operational details with fascinating personal accounts telling the story of Karl Roth and his comrades / Features over 150 b/w photos, many previously unpublished / A major contribution to the history of the Panzertruppen.

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