

To our P38 collectors, I recently encountered one which is classified by Buxton as the Late-Date AC Frame Variations (pages 191 and 276 in his excellent P38 book). These P38 pistols are parts guns, some with hand stamped serial numbers, others with no serial numbers at all, but all having the Walther "ac" code stamped on the left frame just above the trigger guard. This company code was never stamped on the frame of Walther P38 pistols except through the ac41 First Variations and on these Late-Date AC Frame pistols. Estimated production of these parts guns, from the specimens serial numbered, is approximately 10,000. This particular pistol to which I am referring settles one controversy regarding this variation to my satisfaction, in that it proves they were of late war manufacture rather than being postwar assembled weapons.

This P38 was obtained from the veteran who brought it back, an old gentleman who is a loan officer in a small town bank, and his reputation is above reproach. The pistol was removed from the body of a German Infantry officer killed in a firefight which this veteran took part in. The time was late in the war and the place was well inside Germany after the Normandy landings and subsequent invasion.

This particular P38 is one of this variation which has no serial number at all. The frame is marked with the Walther "ac" code and Eagle/359 over the trigger guard on the left side, and the metal is copper colored, with the milling being quite rough. The slide is marked P.38 with the Mauser byf44 code on the left side, with Eagle/WaA135 Waffenamt stamp and Eagle/swastika proof mark on the right side. The blue finish and machining on the slide is of much better quality than on the frame.

The barrel is of Walther manufacture, with Eagle/359 on the left rail and ac on the flat underneath the rails. The hammer has the Mauser Eagle/135 stamp, and the locking block is marked only with an Eagle/swastika proof mark on the left side. Grip panels are standard grooved plastic black Mauser type. Both magazines, original to the pistol, are jvd marked.

As Buxton states in his book, these Late-Date AC Frame Variations are no doubt parts guns, and are certainly the oddball of the oddballs. He gives a list of arguments in support of the theory that they are wartime assembled pistols, with Walther obtaining slides, barrels, and other parts from Mauser and Sprewerke, and assembling them at their factory.

This is logical, in that the unique "ac" marking on the left frame above the trigger guard is common to all of this group. The history given by the GI who took this pistol, and I have no doubts whatsoever as to the authenticity of his story, proves to me that Buxton is correct in his late wartime assembly theory, and that the theory of them being postwar assembled pistols can be discounted.

The Late-Date AC Frame P38 Variations are likely the result of the late wartime German small arms industry's attempt to continue pistol production despite the severe shortages of materials and lack of production facilities due to heavy bombing raids. The fact that weapons with no serial numbers whatsoever actually left the factory and were issued to the military illustrates the desperation efforts connected with this unusual series of P38 pistols.

Sincerely,

Jim Wailin

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