In 2009, it will be 80 years since the first commercially successful double action semi-automatic pistol ever designed was released to the marketplace. The year was 1929 and the handgun was the Walther PP, the letter designation standing for “Polizei Pistole.” The new pistol’s caliber was .32 ACP (which sounds much more formidable than 7.65mm Browning).

The PPK of James Bond lore is much more famous, to be sure, PPK standing for “Polizei Pistole Kriminal,” the weapon shorter in overall length and overall height than the PP. The PPK was intended for use by undercover or plainclothes personnel, the PP for uniform duty. During World War II, of course, both handguns were used by the Nazis as belt pistols. Although the PPK is a little smaller, the PP is not exactly huge. Length overall is just over six and one-half inches, weight of the all-steel pistol is 23 and one-half ounces. Barrel length is just under four inches and magazine capacity, in its original .32 ACP chambering, is eight rounds. Height is four and one-quarter inches, sans magazine, with standard floorplate and finger-rest extension magazines both available.

“Why are you sounding so excited about an eight decades old pistol in .32 Auto?”

Good question. The PP’s a proven design, albeit a bit more complex than guns engineered these days, has the cache of German origin (although various firms have been licensed to make Walthers over the years), the guns tend to be accurate and – here’s the important part – Century International Arms (centuryarms.com) is importing German police turn-in Walther PPs in beautiful condition (except for some honest holster wear) which are priced to retail somewhere between $425 and $450.

“What a deal!”

You’re darn right.

.32 ACP is nothing to scream about ballistically, of course, but it’s no better out of my Seecamp, Sharon’s North American Arms Guardian, or someone else’s Kel-Tec or Autauga. Actually, with the longer barrel found on the PP in .32, both accuracy and performance should, logically, be better than in the smaller vest-pocket-size pistols.

According to the Evan Marshall and Ed Sanow ballistic performance figures, 71-grain .32 ACP Winchester solids have a 50-percent one-shot stop rating, while the Winchester Silvertip 60-grain bullet has a 63-percent rating. If you acquire one of these superb little Walther pistols and it doesn’t handle hollow points (I recommend experimenting with the Winchester and the Federal variants), take it to a competent gunsmith. But, if you’re stuck with the .32 ACP solids, you could do a lot worse. Keep in mind that the longer sight radius, the basic but adequate sights and – usually – a smooth trigger in DA and an easy trigger when fired single action all add up. When people complain about smaller calibers, I have this all but irresistible urge to ask them if they are prepared to volunteer to be shot with one of these lighter calibers. I don’t bother, because I already know the answer I’d get.

The .32 Walther PP from Century International Arms is a fantastic buy. If the .32 caliber issue bothers you, just tell yourself that it’s really 7.65mm Browning! Sounds much better, doesn’t it?

Not quite as long ago as the Walther PP’s introduction, Colonel Charles Askins first published *Texans, Guns and History*. That was 1970. In 2007, Paladin Press (paladinpress.com) re-published the work, including a new introduction by Askins’ son, William, as *The Gunfighters: True Tales of Outlaws, Lawmen and Indians on the Texas Frontier*. Both Sharon and I agree that it’s a sensational read. Askins was always a great storyteller and never known for pulling his punches. Back in the early to mid-1970s, when I was associate editor of Guns Magazine, I edited a lot of Charlie Askins’ articles. I found him at once fun to read, obsessed with stirring up controversy and exceptionally literate, despite his reputation for the rough and tumble side of things. This book from Paladin, which reads like an adventure novel or a classic western, is something no one...

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