

FORGOTTEN INFAMY

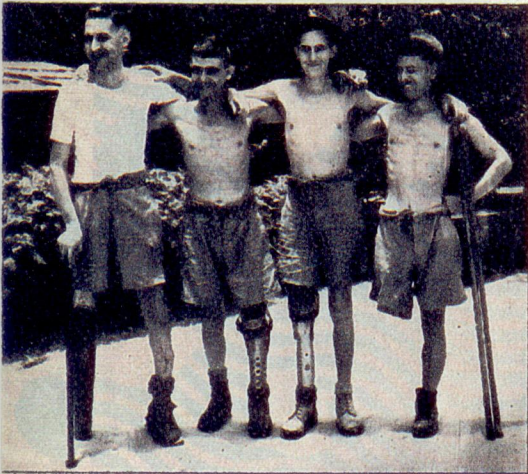
Gavan Daws wants Japan to apologize to American World War II POWs

THE OLD MAN WANTED TO TELL HIS STORY. LUCKILY FOR him, Gavan Daws is a good listener. In 1982, Daws, an Australian-born historian and writer, was having a drink in a Honolulu bar when he overheard a World War II veteran recounting his horrific experiences as a prisoner of war in Shanghai under the Japanese. "My ear grew out in his direction as it does whenever I hear an interesting story," says Daws. "I went down and talked to him, and we talked and talked." The vet, Harry Jeffries, eventually introduced Daws to other buddies who had been held captive, and they directed him to others. By 1991, Daws had recorded the stories of dozens of POWs, men now in their 70s and 80s who had held their chilling wartime tales closely for decades.

Daws compiled their accounts in *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (Morrow), published to acclaim last November and now in its eighth printing. During his research, Daws discovered that as their lives near an end, the ex-prisoners want the world to know what they endured. "These guys feel legitimately like they have been crowded off the pages of history," says Daws. "I think the pages ought to be big enough to include them."

Before that bar-stool encounter, Daws, 61, had scant knowledge of the Pacific POWs. Since then he has thought

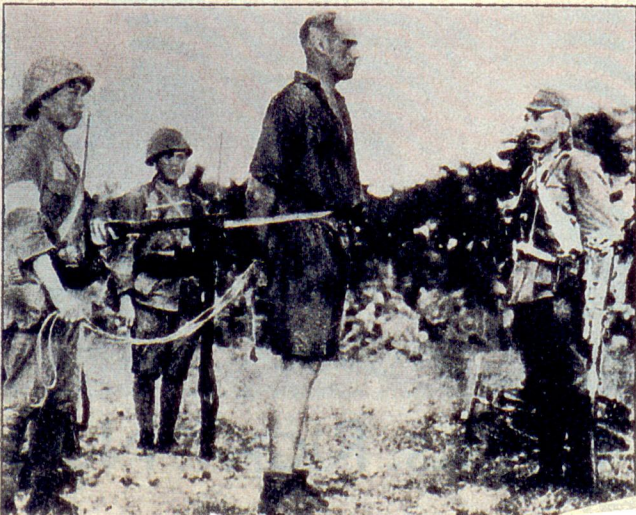
of little else. "I weep for the dead, the disabled and the ruined lives of World War II on both sides of the conflict," says Daws, "but the POWs have had the least acknowledgment." They were sacrificed, he says, to geopolitics: With the Cold War looming and the Soviet Union threatening to dominate the Pacific, it became more politically expedient



➤ "Japan still has much to answer for," says Daws (at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu).

A litany of horror: Prisoners lost their limbs to tropical diseases (left) and endured torture and random murders at the hands of their Japanese captors (below).

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



JOHN STEPHAN COLLECTION



Photographs by John Storey

for America to resume relations with Japan and forgo prosecuting thousands of known war criminals.

With this week marking the 50th anniversary of the Allied victory over Japan, Daws and the survivors continue their public campaign for an apology. Japan's June declaration of "deep remorse" for its wartime actions against other Asian nations didn't mention Allied captives. "If my puny efforts can add even one decibel to the volume of noise to attract the attention of the Japanese government," Daws says, "then it will have been worth it."

Daws's book—part oral history, part archival record based on 10 years of research—describes Japan's assault on Wake

Island, Guam, the Philippines and other Allied strongholds after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. In the months that followed, Japan took more than 140,000 Allied prisoners of war. By V-J Day, Daws says, one in three American POWs was dead. Those who survived were forever scarred by the experience. Many of the prisoners, among them young GIs who had never been outside their home states, were used as human guinea pigs in medical experiments, forced into slave labor building the 250-mile Burma-Siam railroad, starved and subjected to unimaginable forms of torture. "POWs and thousands of captive men, women and children [see story, page 89] were infected with cholera, typhoid and syphilis," some as a

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