



Counting the Days: POWs, Internees, and Stragglers of World War II in the Pacific

Craig B. Smith

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Counting the Days is the story of six prisoners of war imprisoned by both sides during the conflict the Japanese called the "Pacific War." As in all wars, the prisoners were civilians as well as military personnel. Two of the prisoners were captured on the second day of the war and spent the entire war in prison camps: Garth Dunn, a young Marine captured on Guam who faced a death rate in a Japanese prison 10 times that in battle; and Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki, who suffered the ignominy of being Japanese POW number 1. Simon and Lydia Peters were European expatriates living in the Philippines; the Japanese confiscated their house and belongings, imprisoned them, and eventually released them to a harrowing jungle existence caught between Philippine guerilla raids and Japanese counterattacks. Mitsuye Takahashi was a U.S. citizen of Japanese descent living in Malibu, California, who was imprisoned by the United States for the duration of the war, disrupting her life and separating her from all she owned. Masashi Itoh was a Japanese soldier who remained hidden in the jungles of Guam, held captive by his own conscience and beliefs until 1960, 15 years after the end of the war. This is the story of their struggles to stay alive, the small daily triumphs that kept them going—and for some, their almost miraculous survival.

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