

PO2 Stewart Faulkner



Stewart Faulkner had learned to be an intercept operator as a member of the twenty-second class of the "On the Roof Gang" in 1939. As related in Friday's *History Today*, PO2 Faulkner was stationed on Guam in 1941 when the Japanese captured the island. He vividly remembered his experiences in a 1986 interview, including the Japanese trying to find any cryptologists among the radiomen.

After one radioman POW returned from interrogation: "They're looking for you guys. They set me down and sent Japanese code to me." And he said, "When they came to anything I couldn't read, I just broke it down into international." [He had copied the Japanese telegraphic symbols as international Morse characters rather than specific Japanese ones, just as an ordinary radioman would.]

Faulkner resolved to hide his knowledge likewise, and was never found out. Interrogations and life in the POW camp could still be chancy. In his recollection:

"One of the [Japanese] big shots in our camp... his family was burned out; I think every one of them was killed [by a U.S. bombing raid]. The funny part of it was, he didn't take it out on us. ...We had two sets of guards. ...One of the guys is "live and let live," and the other'd try to get you to do something, so he could beat you to death."

He expanded on how things could get out of hand:

"What started out as a punishment turned out to be torture the way they did it. They'd lose their senses....They couldn't seem to hold back. And believe me, you give these guys a baseball bat and they're permitted to hit you once or twice, it just seemed like they couldn't stop sometimes."

The U.S. Navy began bombarding Guam on July 8, 1944; the Army and Marines landed on July 21. The Japanese final stand began on August 10. Mopping up continued into 1945, and the last Japanese soldier surrendered in 1972.

Stu Faulkner was in Japanese camps for three years and nine months, going from 183 to 109 pounds, before being liberated. He went on to receive a commission after the war, and rose to the rank of commander before retiring with 35 years of service in 1971. Perhaps some of his success can be attributed to his remarkable perspective:

"I never blamed anybody [fellow POWs] for saying, "Please, spare me," or whatever they said...and I didn't hold it against them. Because nobody knows what they're going to do when they get in a similar situation. All you can do is just hope that when your time comes, that you can do as well, or better....Boy, I'm telling you, that you grow up fast."