THE RAILWAY MAN

THE TRUE STORY OF ERIC LOMAX'S TALE OF FORGIVENESS FOR THE JAPANESE SOLDIER WHO TORTURED HIM DURING WW2

"SOMETIME THE HATING HAS TO STOP"

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Here is a remarkable true story of forgiveness--a tremendous testament to the courage that propels one toward remembrance, and finally, peace with the past. A classic war autobiography, The Railway Man is a powerful tale of survival and of the human capacity to understand even those who have done us unthinkable harm.

OFFICIAL MOVIE TRAILER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px04904hm88

Eric with the men who portrayed him in the film

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THIS ARTICLE HAS THREE PARTS

PART 1

THE DEATH RAILROAD & ERIC LOMAX (THE RAILWAYMAN)

PART 2

ERIC LOMAX'S OTHER FAMILY NOT MENTIONED IN THE BOOK OR MOVIE

PART 3

THE GUARD TAKASHI NAGASE

PART ONE

THE DEATH RAILROAD – BACKGROUND

Churchill called the Fall of Singapore, on February 15th, 1942, "the greatest disaster ever to have befallen the British Empire". Outnumbered, outgunned, with little air support, and with virtually no knowledge of fighting in jungle terrain, the Allied forces stood little chance against an organized enemy, who confounded expectations by advancing down through the Malayan jungle instead of attacking from the sea.

25,800 British and 18,000 Australian servicemen were amongst the 200,000 men who found themselves prisoners of the Japanese.

Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, led by a Japanese officer, walks under a flag of truce to negotiate the capitulation of Allied forces in Singapore, on 15 February 1942. It was the largest surrender of British-led forces in history.

The defeat of the Japanese navy at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 effectively shut off the sea route to the Indian Ocean and triggered a decision to complete a rail link from China to India, to supply the Japanese campaign in Burma. The missing piece of that line was the 415 km section from Thailand into Burma, a route that would soon become notorious as the "Death Railway." The British had considered building this line forty years earlier but abandoned it due to the difficult terrain - carving through mountains and jungle - the climate, health conditions, and the sheer difficulty of the logistics.

The Japanese Government was not a signatory to the Geneva Convention **and deemed that anyone taken prisoner forfeited their rights and was considered to have changed sides. They therefore decided to put the Allied prisoners of war to work on the railway. Conditions were horrific. 6,648 British and 2,710 Australian POWs are known to have died, with many more left traumatized by their experiences. Many Allied survivors are keen to stress that the local Asian workers suffered the harshest treatment, with more than 80,000 deaths, representing around half the workforce.**

Those veterans are equally likely to point out their dismay that the little most people know about the Death Railway comes from the David Lean film, *The Bridge On The River Kwai - a great film in its way, but an acknowledged work of fiction.* Eric Lomax commented that he had "never seen such well-fed prisoners of war."

There was no bridge over the River Kwai because there was no river called the Kwai. **The film itself was shot in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Much later, to satisfy a growing tourist demand to visit such a bridge, the Thai authorities changed the name of a river crossed by the only remaining prisoner of war built bridge, at Kanchanaburi, where some of The Railway Man was filmed.**

SYNOPSIS

In 1942 Tens of thousands of brave young soldiers become prisoners of war when Japanese forces overrun Singapore. Churchill calls it *"the greatest disaster ever to have befallen the British Empire".* Eric Lomax, a 21-year-old Signals Engineer and railway enthusiast, is one of the surrendered men. Sent to work on the construction of the notorious Death Railway in Thailand, Eric witnesses unimaginable suffering; men forced to hack through rock and jungle with their bare hands, beaten, starved, and prey to tropical diseases. *He builds a secret radio to bring hope*. As he whispers news of Hitler's defeats or American advances in the Pacific, a thousand backs straighten, and exhausted, desperate men resolve to survive another day.

When the radio is discovered, Eric faces beatings, interrogation, and worse. Barely surviving the war he returns home, like so many others, to a country unable to imagine what he and his colleagues have been through*. Haunted by the face of one young Japanese officer, he shuts himself off from the world.*

And then one day, decades later, he meets a beautiful woman - on a train, of course. She makes him laugh for the first time. They court like teenagers and marry quickly. But on their wedding night, Eric's nightmares return; the young Japanese officer dragging him back to the horrors of the past, insisting the war is not over. Patti finds him screaming on the bedroom floor. Humiliated and confused, Eric disappears inside himself again, turning his silent fury on his wife, making her life unbearable.

Patti struggles to find out what torments the man she loves. Battling the code of silence that unites the former prisoners of war she persuades the enigmatic Finlay to tell her a shocking secret. The Japanese officer who holds the key to what happened to her husband is still alive, and Finlay knows where he is. Patti must decide: should Eric, a man desperate for revenge, be given this information? Will she stand by him, whatever he does?

Her decision sets up a return to Thailand for a stunning, unexpected, and ultimately triumphant finale to an extraordinary true story of heroism, humanity, and the redeeming power of love.

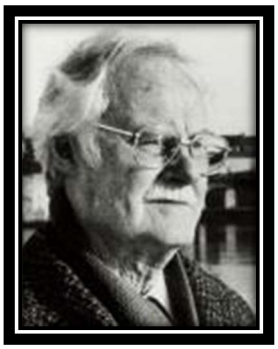
NOTES ON "RAILWAY MAN BY FRANK COTTRELL BOYCE"

Frank Cotrell Boyce -Co-Screenwriter

Most survivors of the notorious Thai/Burma "Death Railway" kept quiet about what happened to them in the War. At least, they were quiet in the daytime.

Their nights were filled with rages and nightmares. Decades on, Eric Lomax broke his silence. Soldier that he was, he turned and faced his demons - both psychological and real. With the help of a remarkable woman, Eric sought out and confronted Takashi Nagase, the officer who had presided over his interrogation and torture. He told the story in The Railway Man - an astonishing memoir that twists around one horrible irony: as a boy, *Eric had been enthralled by the great steam trains that* piled in and out of Edinburgh's Waverley Station. As a young soldier, he saw his comrades work to death and was himself tortured on the Death Railway.

Once he had broken his silence, Eric was passionate about sharing all he had learned - that we are better, stronger than we think are, that being vulnerable is part of that strength, and that love can bring you back from the very darkest place. So it was an unnerving, solemn moment for us when - in the Railway Hotel in York - Eric entrusted us with the making of the film The Railway Man. We did all the things you would have expected us to do. We went with him to Edinburgh to visit all his old stamping grounds - his school, his place of work, the bridge where he watched the trains go by. We went to his childhood home. The young couple who were living there had found a toy train under the floorboards. It was surely Eric's.



We went to Tokyo and recorded interviews with Takashi Nagase. We visited Eric's home in Berwick-upon-Tweed and pored over his unrivaled collection of Bradshaw's Railway Time Tables - some of them so ancient that they showed the times of horse-drawn mail coaches as well as trains. We went for walks along the seafront. Whenever he came down to London he would visit our offices in Soho. We thought we had bought the rights to a book. We found that we had become part of the life of a man. A great and complicated and important man. It's hard to make any film but The Railway Man was particularly hard. It was hard to write the script - to find the balance between the darkness of its heart and the light of its conclusion. To find a happy ending that did not seem pat, to find a way to do justice to the horror without it overwhelming everything else. As time went by we saw Eric changing. When we first met him the book had not long been published, his historic meeting with Nagase was a recent event. As the years went by we saw him become something of a public figure, grow comfortable in that role, and become more relaxed about talking about what had happened.

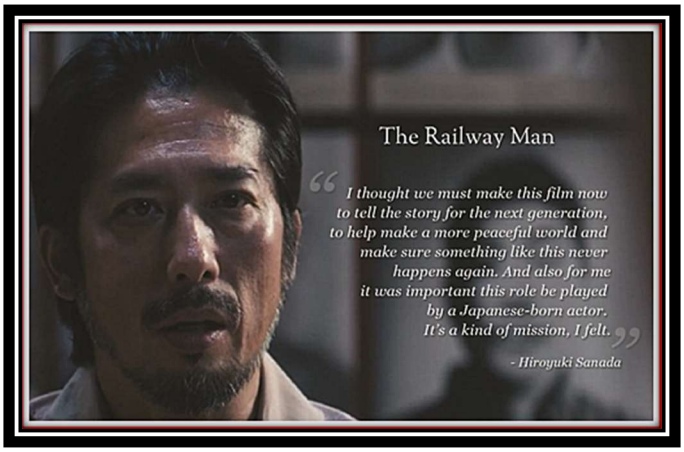
As more time went by we saw him grow older, frailer. The trips to London stopped. The World changed as fast as Eric did. Eric's confrontation with Nagase was more or less unprecedented at the time. Now Truth and Reconciliation committees are part of the process of how we build nations. On the other hand, the torture to which Eric was subjected seemed like a remote and barbaric chapter in human history when we first met Eric. Now water boarding too has somehow become part of the mainstream.

As the years went by we silently shifted from *"we're going to make this film soon" to "we have to make this film before Eric dies."*

Sometimes we lose faith in ourselves. Sometimes we lost faith in each other. But Eric never lost faith in us. And we never lost faith in the story.

Revenge Is Never a Straight Line

The hardest thing of all of course was how to cast Eric. They simply don't make them like Eric anymore. Many of the obvious candidates - Michael Redgrave, Robert Donat, Roger Livesey - were long departed. The only actor we could think of who had those vanishing qualities - grace, understated strength, and intelligence - was Colin Firth. He took the train to Berwick with us. He sat in Eric's front room. He looked through those ancient railway timetables. They laughed. When Eric laughed he would raise both hands and cover his mouth. His blue eyes would crinkle and twinkle. It was probably that giggle as much as the script that bound Colin to the movie.



So we were finally shooting the movie. It was such a joy, a relief that we sometimes forgot what a dark tale we were telling. Members of Eric's family turned up to the set most days. There was a rolling reunion around the catering van, delivering delightful insights into the man but also reminding us of the huge burden the families of the prisoners of war carried. We took care to schedule one day of shooting near Eric's house so that he'd be able to visit the set and swank a little about being played by Colin Firth.

Nicole Kidman, Patti & Eric. Colin Firth

We spent the morning at the bottom of his street but he was too tired and shivery to come out. So Colin went and had lunch with him, taking his co-star Nicole Kidman. This pepped him up enormously so he put on his bobble hat and woolly muffler and insisted on coming out to see what was going on. By then we'd moved to the top of a steep hill overlooking the harbor. It took a team of sparks to hoist his wheelchair onto the location and navigate him through the tracks wires and cranes. It was a little bit Fitzcarraldo and a little bit Heath Robinson. When we'd settled him by the monitor, he pointed to the dolly track on which the camera was mounted. "I'd be fascinated to learn," he said, "what gauge that track is." *Going home afterward, Eric said, "This was one of the best days of my life".*

While we were in the edit, Eric passed away. **We were heartbroken to lose him. All the more so because we were just a few weeks short of getting the film into a state where he could see it. We'd promised Eric he'd see that film one day. Had we broken our promise? Thinking about it now, it was probably a mercy. Eric Lomax's great achievement was to have survived the darkest place and to have left it behind. Why would he want to revisit that in Dolby Stereo and Technicolor? What could we add to what he already knew? His greatest victory was that he was able to shake off the dark shadows that had hunted him and die with a heart full of friendship and cake, love, and steamtrains.**

THE PERSONAL LIFE OF ERIC & PATTI WITH THEIR STORY OF HOW THE EVENTS HAPPENED

The couple was standing amid the gravestones of his wartime comrades who had died at the hands of the Japanese as they built the Burma railroad.

There are 6,982 graves at the Don Rak War Cemetery in Kanchanaburi town, here are the remains of those who died during the construction of the Thai-Burma Death Railway. Of those names, 138 remain unknown

When you go home. Tell them of us and say.
For your tomorrow, We gave our today.

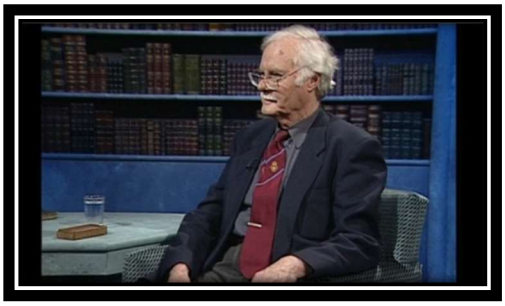
Right up until the moment he met former guard Takashi Nagase again, at the bridge over the River Kwai, *Eric was intent on getting revenge*. But as he poured out his hatred at how the inhuman treatment he suffered at Nagase's hands had blighted his life, his anger had disappeared.

Eric's astonishing story is told in the new movie The Railway Man, starring Colin Firth as the quiet university lecturer, who died in 2012 after a long illness, and Nicole Kidman as his wife.

Patti, 76, admits it took years before her husband finally opened up about his experiences - but meeting his tormentor had an enormous impact on their lives. "I knew Eric didn't want to meet this man in a friendly way. Eric did have some thoughts of meeting him and killing him. He had got it all planned, he admitted it to me later. He was going to garrotte him if he could," she recalls. "He approached the meeting in a very calm way because he wanted to harm Mr. Nagase and have his revenge. But it was only in meeting the man that he realized that it is possible to forgive and it is possible to move on and let the past go."

The relationship between Eric and Patti is at the core of the film but it was pure chance the couple found each other. She had immigrated to Canada with her airmen husband in the 1950s but as their three children had grown up the couple drifted apart. It was on a trip back to Britain in 1980 to visit her mother that she met Eric, *a father-of-two whose own marriage was failing.*

"I met him on a train, of course," she laughs. "He was a fascinating man. I was in my early 40s and he was 62 but you could have taken 10 years off him, everyone was amazed he was that age. He had very thick hair and a grace about him which was very attractive." Patti returned to Canada but the couple kept in touch, writing and calling every week, and the friendship quickly developed into something deeper. She returned to Britain and in 1983 they were married.



But it was on her wedding night that she realized that her new husband had a secret. "I knew he had been in Singapore when it fell to the Japanese in the Second World War but he wouldn't tell me any more than that. "He said 'I will tell you one day' but one day never came.

"On our honeymoon the first night we slept together he had a nightmare. We talked about it in general terms the day after but I thought then it was a one-off occurrence, people do that. But he had nightmares pretty regularly. "It was pretty scary. *He knew he had nightmares but could never tell me why."*

The legacy of his experiences as a prisoner of war manifested themselves during the day as well.

Something as simple as being asked for his name and address to open a bank account brought debilitating flashbacks of his time in the Japanese camp in Thailand. Finally, after three years of his dark moods and nightmares, Patti persuaded him to seek help from the charity the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

Well-versed in the treatment of African and Iraqi victims, Eric was the first Second World War victim they had treated.

Patti was asked to sit in on the counseling sessions - and for the first time, she heard the horrifying truth.

Eric volunteered for the Royal Corps of Signals and was posted to Singapore as a lieutenant. When the country fell to the Japanese in February 1942 he was forced to work as a slave laborer on the 260-mile railway line into Burma.

The brutal conditions saw the prisoners of war working in 100-degree heat by day, overseen by soldiers who saw them as less than human because they had allowed themselves to surrender.

Barely fed, Eric and his comrades suffered from malnutrition and disease *- 60,000 of his comrades starved while 12,399 disease-ridden Allied prisoners of war put to work on the line died.*

Along the railroad in 1945

In secret, Eric built a radio so he could follow the progress of the war but in August 1943, the guards discovered it.

As punishment, Eric and six other prisoners were forced to stand in the searing heat for hours without food or drink. As the sun began to set they were stamped on and beaten unconscious with pickaxe handles. Two prisoners died. Eric was left for two days to die where he fell, his body a broken and bloody mess with his arms, hips, and ribs broken. The guards then dragged him off for further interrogation and torture, including waterboarding. He was imprisoned in a cage the size of a coffin.

Finally, he was sentenced to five years of hard labor and spent the rest of the war in a disease-ridden jail.

Hearing her husband open up for the first time in the counseling sessions brought tears of understanding but also rage for Patti. "I felt such anger against the perpetrators of his terrible suffering and also great compassion for Eric.

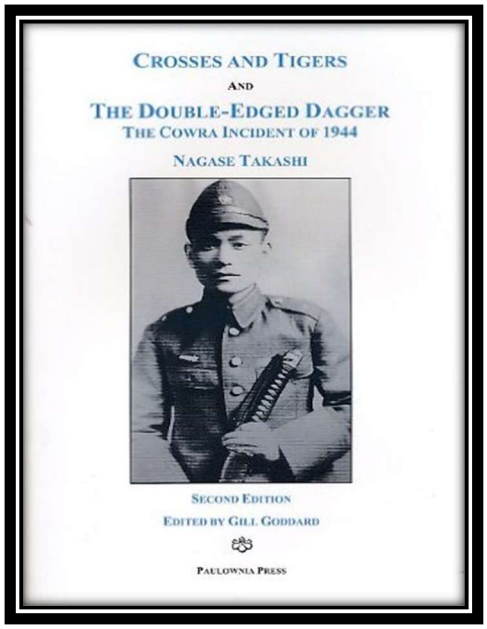
"It made me understand so much as to why he was as he was when he had his dark moments.

"His whole life from when he was a young man had been blighted by all this so I felt very angry about it.

“They asked Eric to write down as much of his story as he could as part of his therapy and Eric amazed us all by saying he had already done it. He had started writing as soon as the Japanese capitulated while he was still in Changi Prison, writing on little bits of paper.

“He made a detailed account of what happened to him and his group. The therapy helped Eric and the nightmares lessened but they never stopped.

THE JAPANESE GUARD TAKASHI NAGASE

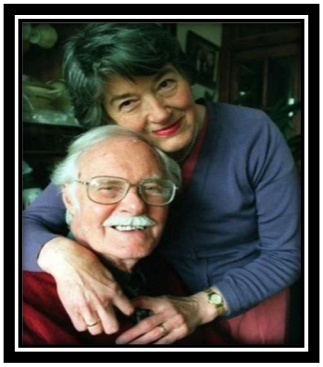


GUARD TAKASHI NAGASE'S BOOK WITH HIS PICTURE ON IT.

Then, one day in the post Eric received a book – Crosses and Tigers by Takashi Nagase – sent to him by another survivor. As he turned it over he stared at the photograph of the author on the back and came face to face with one of his torturers.

In the book, Nagase describes his crimes and his efforts at redemption.

Patti says: “Towards the end of the book he is at one of the big cemeteries in Thailand and he describes how he had felt a feeling of forgiveness there. There was a memorial and he said he felt filled with a golden light and he felt he was forgiven for all his bad deeds.



“Eric didn’t say a word after he read this but I was incandescent with fury. I thought how on earth can this horrible little man feel like that when poor old Eric had been living with all the results of what he had done to him all these years later?”

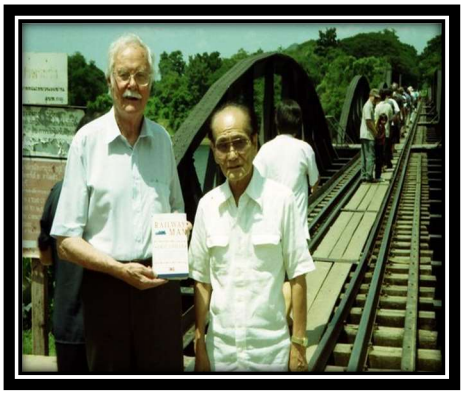
Patti persuaded her husband to let her write to Nagase. **Within the week she had a reply and *for two years* Eric and his former torturer wrote to each other before they decided to meet – at a hotel by the bridge over the River Kwai.**

It was understandably an emotionally charged meeting.

"When they met Eric realized that the other gentleman was a human being," Patti says. "He didn't forgive him immediately, he wanted to make sure that he was sincere in his apologies and his regret, which he was.

THE VIDEO OF THE ACTUAL MEETING

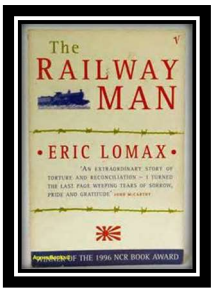
http://www.historyvshollywood.com/video/eric-lomax-takashi-nagase-meeting/

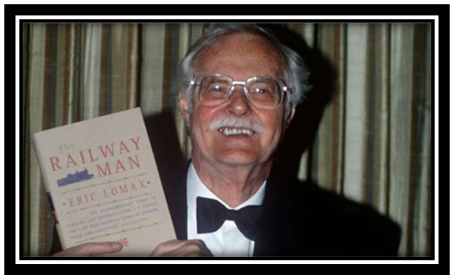


Takashi Nagase, Eric Lomax, and his wife Patricia meet for the first time since the war on the rebuilt Kwai bridge.

"By the act of forgiveness, a weight was lifted. Eric was someone who believed that anger only destroys the angry person. It doesn't hurt the person you are feeling angry about so once he released that he felt freer."

Eric's autobiography became a bestseller and during the filming of the new movie, despite him being seriously ill in a nursing home with the muscle-wasting condition myasthenia gravis, he was given pride of place on the town's walls to watch Colin Firth in action.





He died shortly after filming but he had never intended to see the movie.

Patti says: “He didn’t even want to see the stills from the film. He was frightened it would awaken old memories he wanted to forget and he was quite right too. ”But even after so much suffering, Eric had managed to do what he said and leave his hatred in the past.

Before the Lomaxes left Thailand, they visited the Chungkai War Cemetery. As they both looked at the myriad graves there, Lomax murmured to Patti, ” ***Sometimes the hating has to stop.’***

As Patti says: “It is the last line of the book. It’s the last line of the film and it is the last line of his headstone. It sums up the man.”

INTERVIEW WITH PATTI LOMAX, THE ACTORS AND THE PRODUCER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfqZlHPKWmg

ERIC LOMAX REMEMBERED

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyG1NAaiIxk

Patti Lomax's only solace since Eric’s death has been the hope that the film The Railway Man will raise awareness of PTSD, and its effects on veterans young and old.

NOTE: If interested, much more detailed information is available at:

http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/railway-man/

PART TWO

THE RAILWAY MAN’S FORGOTTEN FAMILY – WE WERE VICTIMS TOO

ERIC LOMAX’S “OTHER” FAMILY

THE FAMILY HE LEFT BEHIND

Eric Lomax's book, The Railway Man, about his experience as a Japanese prisoner of war has inspired a major new film. ***But his first family was written out of the story by Lomax himself.*** Joanna Moorhead talks to his daughter, Charmaine.

Watch The Railway Man, which goes on general release in the New Year, and you'll leave the cinema feeling you know all about the complicated, scarred individual at its center: Eric Lomax, who was tortured by the Japanese during the Second World War and eventually rescued from his torment through the love of his wife Patti.

But there are three names you won't hear during the film: those of Nan, Eric's first wife, and Linda and Charmaine, his daughters. ***The four of them were a family for 37 years yet they are completely missing from the film,*** which stars Colin Firth, Jeremy Irvine, and Nicole Kidman.

Today Nan and Linda are dead, and Eric himself died last year. So when Charmaine attended the film premiere in London earlier this month, she noticed a few puzzled looks when she told people she was Eric's daughter.

Eric Lomax with his daughter Charmaine as a child.
This is the only picture I have found portraying any of the children or their mother, Nan

"I could see them thinking, where do you fit into all this?" she says.

Charmaine wasn't sure whether she wanted to tell the story of how she fitted in, the story that is missing from the film of her father's life and yet integral to it. But seeing The Railway Man has prompted her to do so because, watching it, she felt as though the final piece of her lifelong mission to understand her father was being slotted into place. "On screen, I got to see him as a young man – as he was before I met him, as he was even before he married my mum," she says. "Jeremy Irvine is so like my dad it's uncanny. What I saw for the first time was the man Dad should have been, the man he would have been if he hadn't suffered in the terrible way that he did."

***That understanding has meant the end of a long journey to forgive her father*.**

That is an extraordinary feat because the truth is that Charmaine, Linda, and Nan were victims of torture just as Eric was. But while he was the victim of appalling physical torture (in Burma he was waterboarded daily and kept at the point of death for weeks), his family was tortured secondhand, for decades, because of what it did to him and their relationship.

For Charmaine, growing up, one phrase continually cropped up. "I was forever being told, 'Your dad was tortured'," she recalls. "But no one ever explained what tortured meant. "The truth was that only Eric knew, and the only way he could survive was by burying it so deeply inside himself that he couldn't communicate anything. "He had this armor and you could never get beneath it to find out what was going on," she says.

"My dad's feelings were locked inside himself. He was there physically, but emotionally he was 100% absent," says Charmaine.

Eric was 20 when he joined the Royal Signals Corps and went, in 1941, to Southeast Asia. In the months before he left, he'd been courting Nan in their native Edinburgh, and on the eve of his departure, they got engaged.

Less than a year later, he was captured by the Japanese after the surrender of Singapore – and for the next three and a half years Nan waited, not knowing if he was alive or dead.

Eric, meanwhile, had been force-marched along with other British, Australian, Indian, and Malay prisoners to the infamous concentration camp at Changi. Subsequently, he was sent to Burma to work on the railway to Siam (now Thailand).

Some of the prisoners built their radio which they used to follow the progress of the war. But in August 1943 they were caught; 10 men were arrested, severely beaten (two died), and moved to a special prison for prolonged torture – Eric was one of them.

Incredibly, he survived until the end of the war.

One night in 1945, Nan, a devout Christian, had a dream in which she saw Eric emerging from a bright light. When she woke up, she felt certain that he would come home. A few months later, he did.

They might have waited to get married but while Eric was a prisoner of war, his mother died. His father had remarried. "Dad had nowhere to stay, so he moved in with my mum and her parents," says Charmaine.

Today, every professional he'd have encountered once he was home would have urged him not to rush into anything after his experience in captivity. But this was 1945. An army doctor checked his vital signs and told him to get on with his life. Three weeks later, Eric and Nan were married.

"My mum told me that on their first night together she rubbed cream into the sores on Dad's back and asked him what had happened," says Charmaine. "He said he didn't want to talk about it and that she should never ask him again."

Nan never did ask again: Charmaine thinks she was too afraid. So they papered over what was a dark, fathomless chasm in their marriage and pretended all was well. A year later, Linda was born. Then Eric, who now worked for the Colonial Office, was posted to West Africa to help build a 600-mile railway across what is now Ghana.

While they were there, a second child arrived, a boy who lived for four hours. It was only 40 years later, in 1995 when the autobiography on which the film is based was published, that Nan and Charmaine learned from the dedication that Eric had named his dead son after himself. That spoke volumes, about the emotion locked inside the former soldier and about the complete lack of communication between Eric and Nan. More telling was that in the book Nan and Charmaine were - in their view - airbrushed out of his life, with Nan referred to merely as "S".

Consequently, neither Nan nor Charmaine ever did more than dip into the book and never found out the details of his torture. Indeed, even today Charmaine says she doesn't think she could read the details, and she could barely watch the scenes in the film that show how he was treated.

The Lomaxes returned from Africa in 1955, and Charmaine was born two years later. They lived in Edinburgh and Eric worked as a lecturer at Strathclyde University. But the chasm in the marriage was too big and too deep, to be ignored. Eric spent unexplained time away from the family and was unable to deal with ordinary life, especially the bills.

As Nan struggled to hold everything together, the bailiffs were knocking at the door. Meanwhile, another blow landed when Linda had a brain hemorrhage at the age of 15 - she recovered, although the condition that caused it did eventually kill her.

By the time Charmaine left home to train as a midwife in Bristol in 1980, she suspected her parents' marriage wouldn't survive*. But Nan was devastated when Eric met Patti and left to be with her a few months later.*

After Eric left, Charmaine and Linda cut off contact with him. "It was hard, but we wanted to concentrate on our mum. Dad had made life very tough for her: Mum deserved better."

It wasn't until Linda died in 1993, at the age of 46, that Charmaine saw Eric again. "I stood at my sister's graveside with my mum on one side and my dad on the other," she remembers. "Afterwards, he asked if I'd meet him some time for a cup of tea. So I did, every 18 months or so, although it was often very difficult and we hardly knew what to say to one another."

Part of the fallout from her parents' marriage was that Charmaine vowed never to marry. Instead, she devoted herself to her mother's needs. "I felt my dad hadn't cared for her properly, so I wanted to do that," she says. Nan died in 2003. "After that, there was just me and Dad alive. He was living in Berwick and I'd drive down to see him a few times a year. It was never easy because he still never talked about his feelings, but at least we were in touch."

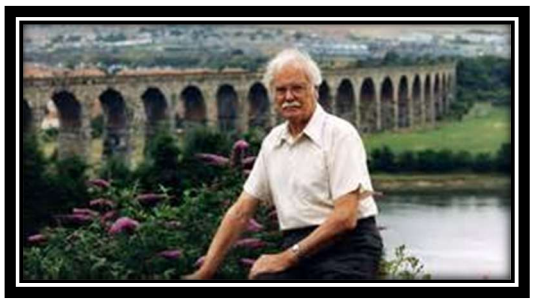
Eric died at the age of 93, the same age as his tormentor Takashi Nagase who also died @ 93,

Today Charmaine is 56. Though she swore she'd never marry, in 2007 she did. Being courageous enough to embark on a new life with her husband, Henry, is, she says, proof that she, just like Eric in the film, has emerged from the black cloud of torture that engulfed so much of her life. Her strong Christian faith, and counselling, have helped her to move on: now she means to make the most of the years ahead.

The film has brought her a new friend in its screenwriter, Frank Cottrell Boyce, who spent a lot of time with Eric while he was putting the script together. "What Frank has told me has helped me understand my father's perspective and his experience," she says.

Charmaine with Eric's second wife, Patti, at the London premiere of The Railway Man.

She doesn't blame Cottrell Boyce for leaving her and Linda and Nan out of the script: it was her father, who left them out of his book. "But we were always there. What happened to him happened to us, too."

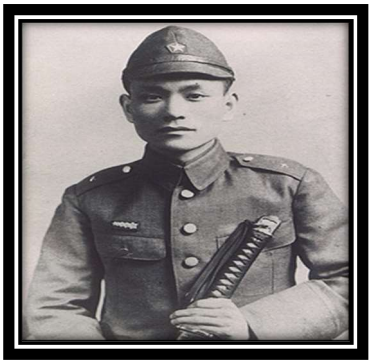


PART THREE

THE JAPANESE SOLDIER WHO LEAD THE TORTURING OF ERIC LOMAX AND THE MAN HE (ERIC) FORGAVE

TAKASHI NAGASE

"BUILDING BRIDGES OVER HATE"



WW2 AS A 22 YR OLD JAPANESE SOLDIER

AS AN 87 YR RETIRED SCHOOLTEACHER, SIX YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH

Takashi Nagase helped torture British POWs in WW2 and has tried to make amends ever since. He still breaks down when he remembers the young man he helped torture." I couldn't stand his pain" He says, choking back tears.

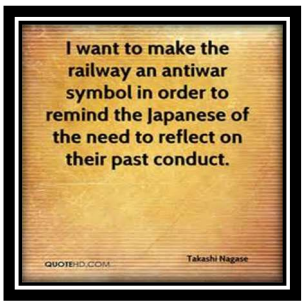
"He was crying, Mother! Mother! And I thought: what she would feel if she could see her son like this? I still dream about it." Nagase was a military interpreter for the dreaded Kempeitai, or special Japanese police in the prison camp made famous in the movie "Bridge on the River Kwai," when POW Eric Lomax was caught with a concealed radio and map.

Neither man has ever completely recovered from what took place in the following days as Lomax was relentlessly tortured. For the 22-year-old Signals Corps engineer from Edinburgh, it was the beginning of a nightmare that has taken him 60 years to shake off. "The psychological damage stays with you forever," he says.

For his 22-year-old tormentor, it was the start of one of war's most remarkable and courageous stories of repentance. Lomax was beaten relentlessly and dragged broken and weak before Nagase and his commanding officer for interrogation. He remembers the officer's face as "full of latent and obvious violence." But it was a "hateful little" interpreter, for days intoning in a flat inflectionless voice: "Lomax you will be killed," who he despised.

Nagase's voice droned in his ear as he was repeatedly held down and water was hosed into his nose and mouth, filling his lungs and stomach. Lomax survived -- barely -- to spend the rest of the war in a brutal military prison and for half a century nursed his hatred against his interrogator. "I wished to drown him, cage him, and beat him," he says.

Today, Nagase is a frail 87-year-old retired English teacher who says he understands the hate directed at him.



"People who have been to hell do not forgive easily," he says. "And we were in hell. But I wanted to help him in some way. I searched my brain for the right English expression and as he was leaving the camp I said to him quietly, 'Keep your chin up.' I still remember his astonished face."

The Thai-Burma Railway was one of the great evil follies of World War II, ***a 415-kilometer track*** hewn mostly by hand through rock and tropical jungle that consumed the lives of up to 100,000 men, including an estimated 16,000 slave laborers conscripted from the ranks of the decimated Allied forces.

By the time what became known as the "Death Railway" was completed, the line was lined with thousands of flimsy wooden crosses marking the bodies of young men from Glasgow, London, and Liverpool, who had succumbed to starvation, disease, and beatings; 60 years later some are still held in the jungle's swampy embrace, lost forever.

Nagase, who was chosen as an interpreter because he had been taught by U.S. Methodists in a Tokyo college, remembers entering the stinking, malaria-ridden Kanchanaburi prison camp, on the railway's route to Burma (now Myanmar) in September 1943. "It was surrounded by these brazen vultures attracted by the stench of the corpses. I still shudder when I think of it."

His halting, imperfect English was often the only conduit between the camp commanders and thousands of prisoners, and he helped interrogate many POWs, but it was the memory of Lomax that lingered. "As I watched him being tortured and heard his cries, I felt I was going to lose my mind. I thought he was going to die and I still remember my relief when I felt his pulse."

When the war ended, Nagase spent seven weeks locating 13,000 abandoned bodies along the line for the Allied War Graves Commission; many now lie in a cemetery in front of Kanchanaburi Station. For most, this gruesome work would be penance enough for sins committed under orders during wartime, but Nagase was only beginning his long journey to redemption.

"The work of searching for bodies changed my whole life," he says.

On the far left

He began to write and lecture in Japan about the horrors he had seen, harshly criticizing, at some personal risk, the Japanese military, and the Emperor system that survived the war. "It should be completely abolished," he says today. "The Emperor should apologize for what was done in his name."

He used much of his own money to build memorials across Thailand, including a Buddhist peace temple near the Tham Kham Bridge over the Kwai Noi River -- the bridge on the River Kwai -- and to fund education programs in the area. Most remarkably of all, he has returned to Thailand 125 times, the last time in June this year, trips he says 'calm his soul.'

In 1976, he organized the first of a series of reunions between ex-POWs and Japanese soldiers, a tense affair on the famous bridge which was overseen by Thai riot police, "just in case." Nagase was criticized by the Japanese press for holding the Thai national flag rather than the Rising Sun that had once fluttered over the camp. "Do they know how many Thai people were slaughtered under that flag," he asks.

But he had to wait until March 1993 before a reunion on the banks of the Kwai with the tall, blue-eyed Scotsman he had helped interrogate. Although not yet ready to forgive, Lomax had been disarmed by an "extraordinarily beautiful" letter from Nagase. He had gone to Thailand not knowing what to expect and ended up comforting a shaking, crying Nagase who simply kept saying: "I am so sorry, so very, very sorry."

The formal forgiveness that Nagase craved came later. "I knew he had hated me for 50 years and I wanted to ask him if he forgave me, but I couldn't find a way," says Nagase today. So I said: 'Can we be friends,' and he said 'Yes.'" And the old soldier who will again travel to Berwick-upon-Tweed next month to see the man he now calls "my friend" is again wracked by sobs.

When they meet, the men swap war stories and share their astonishment at the 'utter futility' of the project that scared their lives so profoundly.

Lomax wrote in his biography, The Railway Man: "The Pyramids, that other great engineering disaster, is at least a monument to our love of beauty, as well as to slave labor; the railway is a dead end in the jungle...The line has become pointless. It now runs for about 60 miles and then stops."

Nagase has never gotten over his bitterness at the waste of lives and believes, controversially, that young Japanese today share responsibility for what happened. In July this year, he astonished a group of British high students on an Imperial War Museum-sponsored trip in Japan by tearfully apologizing to them and demanding that a Japanese student do the same. "This is not a problem of our generation," said the bewildered Japanese, a reply that infuriated Nagase.

"It is not a generational issue," he says. "The shame belongs to the whole Japanese race." Needless to say, he is disgusted by attempts by some nationalist scholars and politicians in Japan to rewrite history. "The textbooks they have written contain the same things as we were taught in school in the textbooks in the lead up to the war. It is unforgivable."

As a boy

And he has no tolerance for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, the war memorial that he and Lomax visited together when the Scotsman came to Japan. Lomax was astonished to see a monument in the shrine to the hated Kempeitai, saying, "It is like seeing a memorial to the Gestapo in a German cathedral." Inside they found an "immaculate" C56 steam locomotive from the Thai-Burma railway, with no mention of those who died constructing it; Lomax calls it a "monument to barbarism."

"Koizumi is a fool," spits Nagase. "I don't care who I say this to. And why are the newspapers now writing that the war was good? What do they think the Japanese Imperial Army was doing in East Asia for 15 years? Why don't they listen to what other Asian people are saying? Sometimes this is an odd country."

But although he says he is considered a "traitor" in Japan, he also frequently criticizes the U.S. **"What the Americans are doing in Iraq is not good," he says. "In war people identify exclusively with their country. It makes people crazy. There has to be other ways of solving problems."**

At 87, Nagase knows his time is short and desperately *wants the railway declared a U.N. World Heritage Site before he dies*. In November, despite a dangerously weak heart, he will cycle with a group of Japanese peace campaigners along the remains of the railway as part of his campaign. He has cultivated good ties with Thai government officials and won the support of several embassies, but the U.N. designation is controversial.

There is little official support in Japan for a memorial to one of history's most barbaric episodes, and some veterans are still reluctant to embrace their former captors in a joint campaign; others believe that the railway should be allowed to sink back into the jungle. A 1987 commercial plan to renovate the line was criticized by the former Allied countries and withdrawn.

British Foreign Office spokesman Dan Chugg said the British government had not been formally approached about the move, but said any response "would depend very much on the views of the veterans about how we might feel about the proposal. If it comes up we would talk to veterans groups and take it from there. Because it is not a site in the UK we are simply an interested observer."

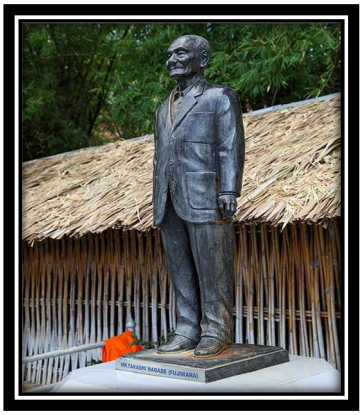
For his part, Lomax is unequivocal. "He has my complete support. This is very important to him."

After 60 years of campaigning, to make up for less than two years of service in the Thai prison camp, those who know Nagase relentlessly say his search for redemption is humbling, and awe-inspiring.

"He is so courageous," says Keiko Tamura, who runs an organization that helps locate former allied POWs in Japan. "The people who fought in the war forgot their humanity, so it is a long battle to get them to see each other as human beings again. That's what he does. He is often asked why he continues, and he says it is so we won't forget those who died."

He died on June 21, 2011, **in Kurashiki, Okayama of natural causes at the age of 93. Eric Lomax also died at 93.**

The statue of Nagase Takashi stands in Honor at the river entrance to the JEATH Museum, with the bamboo hut of the museum in the background. The acronym JEATH stands for the primary nationalities involved in the construction of the railway: Japanese, English, Australian, American, Thai, and Holland.



He is known for his work on To End All Wars (2001), The Railway Man (2013), and Enemy, My Friend? (1995). His obituary indicates that he became a Buddhist Priest. His River Kwai Peace Foundation has provided thousands of scholarships to disadvantaged students in Kanchanaburi.