

50 Years On  
John Gordon Rattenbury's Story

by  
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SCENE 1.

EXT. PARIS - DAY

Photo sequence of Paris' monuments, and general footage of Paris. Can hear the atmosphere of 1940s Paris with the sounds matching to the images used. Sequence finishes on a Hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Silhouette of a couple kissing in front of a large window. They move around the room gazing at each other, hugging, and holding each other's hands.

JOHN (NARRATION)

It was the perfect break; Paris. Such a beautiful city,  
so much history, so much beauty. Spending it with Eileen was  
one of the most memorable few days of my life...

EILEEN moves closer into JOHN, as though she is about to kiss him...  
With a smile she looks into his eyes and asks:

EILEEN

Shall we go for breakfast then?

INT. HOTEL CAFÉ - DAY

The COUPLE move downstairs to the hotel café to get breakfast. They're sat on a small table facing each other, with a pot of tea in the middle. Women in the distance are crying, clawing onto their husbands and sons. JOHN and EILEEN don't notice this; they're only concentrating on each other, and what they will have for their breakfast.

A waitress comes up to them with a tear in her eye, asking what the COUPLE wants for their breakfast.

JOHN

(In French)

Two croissants with jams please

EILEEN

Oh don't forget another pot a tea!

JOHN

(In French)

And another pot of tea please

WAITRESS  
(French accent)  
Thank You

The waitress walks off rubbing her eyes. JOHN then gets up from his chair and gives EILEEN a kiss.

JOHN  
I'm just going to get the morning paper, won't  
be a minute

JOHN walks to the other side of the café to a newspaper stand to choose which paper he wants. He picks up the closet paper and reads in horror the title of the front page; "**HITLER ATTAQUE LA POLOGNE**". JOHN drops the paper and looks around him, understanding now the reason for the weeping women. He then looks out of the window opposite him, to see cars, buses and people filling the roads. There was a general feeling that anything could happen at the moment...

JOHN (NARRATION)  
Hitler had been attacking Poland for months with abuse and threats, but this was not just words. The Germans announced that they had invaded Poland. There was a general feeling that anything could happen at the moment...

CUT TO BLACK.

SCENE 2.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - AFTERNOON

JOHN and EILEEN have arrived back to LONDON and are visiting JOHNS PARENTS HOUSE, to help them prepare for the war. JOHN KNOCKS on the door to his PARENTS HOUSE. His FATHER answers the door.

JOHN (NARRATION)  
Apart from the barrage balloons, London seemed quite normal. My parents were thankful to see us, fed us, and let us go off to sleep as fast as possible.

The next day, my parents went as usual to church. They came back just before 11am to listen to Mr Chamberlain's announcement, to learn that Britain was now at war with Germany.

Minutes later the AIR-RAID SIRENS sounded.

JOHNS FATHER

(Shouting)

To the shelter! It's the space under the stairs!

The siren was BEAMING through the house as family hurried to the shelter, shut the door and waited in the pitch black.

Seconds later silence struck them, with the "All clear!" shortly after. They leave the cramped shelter and carry on with their day and have lunch as a family.

JOHN and EILEEN arrive back home. They instantly start blacking out their house before they do anything else, leaving their suitcases in the doorway.

JOHN (NARRATION)

We had lunch together as a family, and EILEEN and I left for home shortly after.

Blacking out our home was the very first thing we had to undertake as soon as we got home. One of the more boring but not dangerous drawbacks of the war.

This time of waiting for something to happen went on for months, and was known as the 'Phoney War'. We as a country were not strong enough to go on the offensive anytime soon.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 3.

EXT. OUTSIDE TOWN HALL - DAY

JOHN is waiting in line with 20 other men in a queue that starts outside the town hall building to the inside, with a desk at the front with 5 soldiers informing where the men will be going. Some men look frightened, others look proud, and others are just blank. MURMERS can be heard around but nothing of significance is said. JOHN moves to the front of his queue, hands in his form and is informed he must report to the GUARDS DEPOT in SUURAY, by the soldier sitting in front of him.

SOLDIER

Guards Depot at Caterham, Surry.

Next!

JOHN leaves the desk and leaves the town hall for home. When arriving at home, he has lunch with his family, informing EILEEN of his day.

JOHN (NARRATION)

I completed basic training at the Guards Depot,  
and was told I was going to leave for South Africa  
in the coming weeks.

CUT TO BLACK.

SCENE 4.

INT. MESS HALL ON THE CARRIER SHIP TO SOUTH AFRICA - NIGHT

JOHN is lining up to get his dinner in a full MESS HALL. Many soldier chefs are giving out plates with roast turkey dinners on. The overall atmosphere is positive on the ship.

SOLDIER CHEF  
Turkey today boss

JOHN  
Thank you sir!

SOLDIER CHEF  
Plum pudding later if you fancy it?

JOHN goes to sit with his friends on a table to eat his dinner. HOWARD comes and sits next to him with the same meal.

HOWARD  
So how long have we got left on this boat?

JOHN  
A couple more weeks I believe, and please stop  
calling it a boat HOWARD, this is the biggest ship in the  
convoy!

HOWARD  
Yes, yes I know, it just makes me feel  
less vulnerable that's all.

The men carry on with their dinner, enjoying the well-cooked food, and enjoying their experience on the ship so far.

Moments later the ship goes black, all electricity on the ship was cut. The engine stopped running. The ship was SILENT. JOHN looks over at HOWARD with fear in his eyes. Waves are crashes against the ship, causing the ship to rattle and creak. The sounds of AIRPLANES are heard in the distance. They're coming closer to the ship. A few plates and dishes crash on the floor causing alarm to the soldiers, but still no one moves. The AIRPLANES get quieter and leave the area. The ship is

still pitch black and SILENT. HOWARD stands up to see if he can see anything out of a near by window. The moon is staring right back at him; nothing can be seen.

FADE TO DAY.

SCENE 5.

EXT. CAPE TOWN MARKET - DAY

Sun staring at the camera (same to how the moon was in previous shot).

JOHN (NARRATION)

We arrived in South Africa just after  
Singapore fell, one of the biggest disasters  
for us in the whole war.

South Africa was a hot country, with a lot of  
interesting cultural qualities. We went to the market  
in our free time and HOWARD saw a dress stall  
so we could get we could get dresses  
for our daughters.

JOHN and HOWARD are in a market stall full of women's dresses, JOHN and HOWARD are discussing with the shopkeeper and her daughter about dresses.

SHOP KEEPER

(South African accent)

If she's nearly three I would think this size

The SHOP KEEPER hands JOHN the floral dress, with JOHN handing her the money in response. HOWARD and JOHN say "Thank you" and set off for the train station just short a walk away. They enter the station and both get on the train towards BURMA.

JOHN (NARRATION)

It was rear that we actually had free time  
to spend as we wish, with the war being in  
full flow. Germany had been stretching through Europe  
whilst the Japanese were pressing through Asia.

My journey then took me to the war in BURMA.  
A country occupied by the Japanese.

FADE TO BLACK.

## SCENE 6.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

JOHN standing on a busy train, holding onto a railing above him, looking out of the window parallel to him.

JOHN (NARRATION)

Through months of travelling on and off shore we were finally in BURMA. We stopped at various stations during our time, moving troops around the country. HOWARD got off at one of these stops, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

I wanted to stretch my legs so walked up the train to find a dead silent coach, with little movement. I carried on walking down the coach with soldiers staring at me throughout. I thought nothing of it, until I saw, at the end of the coach, held by two intimidating soldiers, a Japanese soldier, covered in bandages, blood and dirt, piercing his eyes right into me.

He didn't move an inch. I stood still.

He blinked. I blinked.

He smirked at me.

I turned around and walked straight back to my original carriage.

This brought the war to reality for me, seeing the enemy for the first time, not knowing what the future may hold.

JOHN walks back to his original standing place in the previous coach and stairs down at the floor for a few seconds, and then slowly shuts his eyes. ALL SOUNDS FADE OUT.

FADE TO BLACK.

## SCENE 7.

EXT. BURMA CAMP - DAY.

BLACK SCREEN. Can hear heavy rain, murmurs and the sounds of heavy footsteps. The sounds of objects moving are fading in.

CORPORAL

(Dialogue fades in)

Make sure all roads are blocked, we have

various by-roads we can occupy, leaving  
only one route in and out.

OTHER SOLDIERS

Yes sir!

CORPORAL

John Gordon!

Understand?!

JOHNS face appears on screen, focusing on his eyes. He looks up at the  
CORPORAL and replies.

JOHN

Sir, yes sir

CORPORAL

Good, I'll be back in 2 hours to check on  
progress.

JOHN (NARRATION)

We set up, and prepared for attacks. It had been  
hours and we saw no signs of the Japs. Day went  
to night, and still nothing...

We waited for hours, staring at an empty road  
Waiting for something to happen.

JOHN and his squad are on watch out, looking out at the narrow road  
with a shallow ditch and tree line on each side, waiting for the enemy.

GUN SHOTS in the distance, with a loud TWANG!

JOHN jumps back and stumbles. Looking down at his legs he spots a  
small tear in his trousers, just above the knee. Everything goes SILENT  
and JOHN believes he's been shot. A MUTED PANIC comes across the  
soldiers. DAVID grabs and comforts JOHN.

DAVID

(Quietly but anxiously)

Where is it? Where did you get hit?

JOHN

(Quietly)

Shhh! Don't worry DAVID it's nothing!

It went straight through my legs!

JOHN and DAVID get back into position; watching the road, when a  
messenger comes running up the tree line towards the awaiting squad.



MESSENGER

(Whispering)

We're pushing up! You and D Company are moving  
into position!

DAVID

(Quietly)

Okay boys, you know what to do,  
get into position and move out!

The squad moved up on each side of the road in the pitch black, hearing only MURMURS and slight GUN FIRE.

D COMPANY pushes up first, around a narrow corner with a cliff on one side and a river on the other. 10 of the men go first and are instantly met by FURIOUS GUNFIRE. They rush back into position - no one was hit. JOHNS squad then push forward in behind D COMPANY. Each company get into position on each side of the road, steadily moving forward in SILENCE. They stop just before the corner. JAPANESE MURMURS can be heard and then DEAD SILENCE for a few seconds.

The company's both move forward slightly, with DAVID edging forward and looking around. The road is pitch black and SILENT.

FURIOUS GUN then sprays towards the ALLIES.

DAVID

(Shouting)

Get Down!

The ALLIES rush back into the ditches by the side of the road, with GUN FIRE constantly bombarding them. The men lie in the ditches, keeping clear of the GUN FIRE.

The men stayed down, with the GUN FIRE eventually dying out.

JOHN (NARRATION)

The GUN FIRE carried on throughout the night.

We didn't sleep, we just held our position,  
and waited for the JAPS to tire out.

The morning came and the GUN FIRE had finally stopped.

We moved up the road to find that they had  
all left their position. We were all relieved and could  
finally relax after a long night. D COMPANY SERGENT  
congratulated us, and discharged us from our duty.

JOHN and DAVID travelling on train through BURMA and INDIA,  
relaxing and enjoying their journey home.

JOHN (NARRATION)

We travelled back to BURMA H.Q. and found out  
it was our time to head back home. The war  
was almost won.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.

TITLES THANKING JOHN GORDON RATTENBURY  
FOR HIS STORY. PAYING HOMAGE TO THE  
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END CREDITS.

