

Spirit of Anzac Award: *The Legend of the ANZACS*

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"How does the ANZAC Spirit provide inspiration for the youth of the 21st Century?"

The ANZAC Spirit born from the hardships endured by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in World War One has prevailed throughout 100 years to maintain a steady presence in the lives of all Australians. The youth of today, those who have grown up in a relatively peaceful world have not forgotten this spirit and continuously display it through their various actions. These young men and women are inspired by the many traits which were the backbone of the Australian men on the frontline in numerous ways that may not be expressly realised by others. Examples include the help provided by young people during times of crisis such as the Queensland floods and incidents overseas.

On the eve of the 25 of April, 1915 Australian and New Zealand soldiers prepared to storm the beaches at ANZAC Cove (King 2008), not realising that in their bid to win the fight they would create a new identity for their emerging nation. Through the struggles that followed on Gallipoli's shores, the ANZACs proved their worth in battle and began to display traits that would be remembered throughout the generations. The soldiers were unprepared for trench warfare so periscopes were fashioned out of shaving mirrors showing great resourcefulness. Life was made bearable by banding together, relying on one another and utilising their unique sense of humour whenever spare time was presented (King 2008). Each and every ANZAC showed such traits but some have been more noticeably remembered over time. One such Anzac was Pte "Simpson" Kirkpatrick, remembered for his outstanding bravery in collecting wounded soldiers along the front line and meeting the danger "whistling and singing" (King 2008). The difficulties faced in Turkey by the ANZAC soldiers created a spirit that was unbreakable, combining the traits of bravery, mateship, resourcefulness and larrikinism into a legend that would be remembered to the present day (Australian War Memorial n.d.; Australian War Memorial n.d.).

Stories of the ANZAC's have been passed down from generation to generation, through diaries, spoken word and visits to different war cemeteries and memorials. A key part of many Australian families are the stories of relatives who fought and gave their lives for Australia. Each story passed down is unique and provides its own inspiration. Today's youth grow up hearing about the stories of their ancestors and the spirit they embodied in the hopes that they will be inspired by such spirit. In my family the stories of my Great Grandpa (Pte West-WWII) and my Great-Great Grandpa (Pte Stirling-WWI) are very important and kept alive in many ways. Recently my Grandpa wrote up a brief biography of Pte West's time in the war after visiting his grave in Burma. The details of his movements before going overseas and within Australia provide great depth to his memory. Pte Stirling kept a diary after departing Australia and the entries show just how he coped with the war up to the point when he was killed in action. Within his diary, he writes of the men he served with, their daily lives and challenges. His diary shows the spirit of the ANZACs as captured in the poem 'To the Sunburnt Ear' which says the men "went to war with the mind of a soldier but the heart and soul of a mate"(Gunter n.d.).

The memories of these two brave men continuously inspire me to achieve whatever I wish to achieve. Neither of them had the opportunity to live their life to the full extent that they wished to and I intend to follow my dreams. I know that studying for university and becoming a pilot will be challenging but the perseverance shown by Pte Stirling to see the job through provides great inspiration.

The ANZAC spirit has changed slightly over the years to not only represent the male population but to encompass all Australian men and women. With equal opportunities the spirit which was once displayed by the Australian men on the front line is embodied by many

different individuals. The Australian Defence Force on the whole continues to instil the values present in the battles in Gallipoli but many other Australians display the characteristics of the ANZAC soldiers. In times of hardship the traits become very prominent as has been seen in recent years. When Queensland became flooded many football teams and other individuals provided aid to those in need of it. Many of the people who provided aid were young but displayed endurance, mateship and perseverance when their mates needed a hand.

Alongside the general public, serving Defence personnel display the ANZAC spirit in many of their different duties and operations. A younger serving member of the ADF who has recently been awarded the Victoria Cross is Corporal Mark Donaldson (Department of Defence 2012). His actions in Afghanistan showed distinct loyalty to his team mates and extreme dedication to duty. Amidst heavy gunfire CPL Donaldson risked his own life by drawing opposition gunfire away from wounded personnel as well as running out from cover in order to assist a wounded interpreter. These actions were in a similar spirit to many actions undertaken by ANZAC soldiers during WWI and WWII showing that the Spirit of the ANZAC's is still alive today, in conflict as well as in peace.

Youth throughout Australia have been greatly impacted by the sacrifice of the Australian and New Zealand Soldiers in World War One and the legend they left behind. Family remembrance and the passing down of stories has been a key part of today's generation upbringing. As such the stories of ancestors and other family members provide the greatest inspiration for persevering to achieve our goals or when times get difficult.

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