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'In 2005, Australia commemorates the 90th Anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign and the forging of the ANZAC tradition. What elements of the ANZAC tradition and spirit have remained constant in Australian society?'

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The Anzac Spirit

As the first drop of Anzac blood fell into an incarnadine Turkish sea, legend was formed. As yet another tear dropped to the Western Front, for a fallen friend, resolve was gained. As a bead of sweat raced down a freckled brow, in the sweltering New Guinea heat, courage was found. Ninety years after the Anzac landing in Gallipoli, this legend of strength, courage and mateship has evolved, grown, and flourished. The Anzac spirit is a spirit forged in blood, sweat and tears, rising from the ashes of war, tempered with a memory of the brave, the strong, and the resolute. It is a spirit that carries us, a spirit that makes us proud, a spirit that *is* Australia; it is the spirit that was, that is, and will always be the Anzacs.

The Gallipoli campaign was an arduous and bloody one. It would last less than a year, cost 8,141 ANZAC lives, and ultimately fail. In the midst of this darkness, from the ashes of fear, rose a legend. The troops that fought at Gallipoli were some of the most spirited and valiant ever seen. Nowhere more so than at Lone Pine. Through the most appalling conditions, through fierce enemy fire, the Anzac troops fought with unwavering courage, with their bare hands, to capture the Lone Pine, the battle would be forever marked in the

annals of history – 7 Victoria crosses were awarded. It is battles like these, filled with such bravery, that are the true embodiment of the Anzac legend.

“There are poets and writers who see naught in war but carrion, filth, savagery and horror...To me this is no valley of death – it is a valley brim full of life at its highest power”¹

From the failure of Gallipoli, rose the legend that is Anzac. It gave Australia a new and spirited identity. Suddenly, we could feel prouder than ever to be Australians. Each time the Australian flag flew, each time the band played Waltzing Matilda, the song of the Anzacs was heard. We became a nation bonded through valor, strengthened in tragedy, and brought together through pride. It is this patriotism that still exists today. We are proud of who we are, where we have come from, and what we have achieved. The Anzacs, through their tremendous fighting spirit, became the embodiment of what it meant to be an Australian.

The Anzac legend however, was not purely a product of the Gallipoli campaign; it was a legend that strengthened over the years. Again, Australia’s brave and dogged would face great obstacles, and again they would be overcome. In the sweltering heat of Papua New Guinea, in 1942, yet another spark would erupt into the Anzac blaze. In the midst of the Second World War, the Anzacs were forced to defend the only remaining garrison

¹ *General Sir Ian Hamilton, 30 May 1915 (History in Quotations)*

against the Japanese – Port Moresby. It was a troupe of Anzac soldiers that was the only hope of warding off the imminent invasion. The Japanese planned to take the Port via the Kokoda Track, a name that would become synonymous with the bravery of the Anzacs. It began a horrifying and arduous battle, filled with death and fear. Yet never did they give up. Once again Australia's brave fought back, fighting with every strength, every bit of courage they could muster, repudiating defeat. Once again, the Anzac spirit reigned true. Australia's brave were willing to sacrifice all for their cause, for their mates, but most of all, for their country.

It is this courage, this willingness to give your all for a cause, this amazing spirit that echoes years on in our society, that resonates throughout. Australia is one of the most wonderfully multicultural societies in the world – it is a country rich in its ethnic diversity. If there is anything that the tragedies of war and the achievements of the Anzacs have taught us, it is the importance of unity. The Anzac spirit has allowed us to grow into the free society we enjoy today – it is embodied in our democratic government which has allowed Australia to flourish into the great civil society in which we live. The beauty of Australian culture exists in its amazing spirit of understanding, of friendship, of selflessness. It is this spirit of camaraderie that has stemmed from the Anzacs, from people like John Simpson Kirkpatrick, who risked his life to save the lives of his fellow men, that has grown among us, and that has truly brought us together, as Australians.

Throughout the history of the Anzacs, in the face of greatest adversity, a force has risen, a force of deepest courage, a courage entrenched in the bonds of friendship. It is this

courage that remains in our society today. I myself have seen this courage time and again. In October 2002, tragedy struck. In a country where all we know is peace, the bombing of two nightclubs in Kuta, Bali, resulting in the death of 88 Australians, came as a cruel shock. The whole country was wracked with grief. It was then, in the face of adversity, that Australia came together. There was a tremendous outpouring of support for the victims and their families. There were volunteer groups from organizations such as the Salvation Army, and the Red Cross that traveled throughout Australia offering support to those in need. It seemed all of Australia was willing to give – donations from people all over Australia were given to the victims. Once again Australia embodied the Anzac spirit, coming together in the face of adversity, displaying the greatest courage, never conceding defeat.

The Anzac spirit has also been evident to me on a more personal level. Earlier last year, Canberra witnessed a fire that affected the entire city. As the sky went as red as Remembrance poppies, enormous battles of courage were being fought. Firefighters battled against what seemed insurmountable odds, struggling to control the raging inferno. It seemed all would be lost; and in fact 6 lives and over 500 homes were. Through it all, however, came tremendous courage. Stories of heroic deeds emerged to inspire us. Yet it was the tremendous outpour of support following the fires that truly inspired me, I witnessed this through my own community service as what was lost was restored. Canberra came together in tremendous spirit of friendship and support to try and rebuild what had been so tragically lost. It was this spirit that has brought us together, and set us apart, as a community, as a people, and as a nation.

There is a spirit that resonates in our society, that echoes in our country; it is a spirit that was first forged nearly a century ago in the blood of our forefathers. Courage, friendship, strength, loyalty, and tremendous patriotism, all are elements embodied by the Anzac soldiers, all are traditions we carry with us today. The Anzac spirit is the beating heart of our country; it is who we are, who we have been, and who we will always be; Australians. In the words of Gallipoli historian C.E.W. Bean; “...ANZAC stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat.”²

Word Count; 1, 200 words

² C.E.W. Bean, *ANZAC to Amiens, Canberra, 1946, p.181 (AWM)*

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