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What elements of the ANZAC tradition and spirit remained have constant in Australian society?

The ANZAC tradition and spirit were founded in the Gallipoli campaign of World War I. The ANZAC battle gave the fledgling nation of Australia its 'baptism of fire', and consequently, the soldiers became one of the most powerful icons of Australian culture for their spirit and conduct in trial. Official Australian war historian, C.E.W. Bean ('ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee (Queensland)', 2004, Online), praised the ANZAC spirit to have "stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and endurance that will never own defeat." It embodied ideals which successive generations have strived to uphold in times of war and peacekeeping efforts. Away from military conflict, the spirit was also embedded in the daily life of ordinary Australians who achieved extraordinary feats. The tradition and spirit carried beyond the horrors of the battlefield to remain an intangible, binding force in Australian society.

Ironically, the ANZAC spirit was born in terrible military defeat in the Gallipoli campaign from April to December 1915. On 25 April, the ANZAC troops landed at the wrong site and in critical geographical disadvantage, resulting in a horrendous loss of lives. Yet the conduct of these soldiers in battle converted an ultimate military defeat into moral victory (Davison, 2001, 28). Regardless of imminent failure due to strategic flaws, extremes of climate and terrain, diseases, thirst and exhaustion, this inexperienced group of adolescent men displayed superhuman endurance. Experienced British war correspondent, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (in Pook, 1993, 76), commended them as a "race of athletes" and explained, "they had been tried for the first time and had not been wanting". When Turkish snipers and tangles of hills and scrubs reduced their numbers by the thousands, the living maintained their offensive with stoic perseverance and ingenuity derived from "the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity" (in Cameron, 2000, 50). Throughout the campaign, the men fought with good humour, mateship and a reckless love of life characteristic of the 'Aussie digger'. Bill Gammage (1974, 89), in his widely acclaimed book, *The Broken Years*, remarked, "They had come to their greatest and gayest adventure, and they were enjoying it". The ANZACs fought with a spirit that refused to be broken by hardship. The manner in which the ANZAC soldiers responded to trial left a living legacy that became a central element of Australian society.

Another generation of young soldiers relived the ANZAC legend on the Kokoda Track fighting against the aggressive Japanese expansion heading towards Australia's doorsteps in World War II. Australia's finest troops were stationed in the Middle East, leaving only the militia to defend against invasion. Untrained and untested, teenage men arrived on the Kokoda Track in July 1942 outnumbered six to one by Japanese soldiers who were experienced and prepared to fight to the death. Perhaps more than the Japanese soldiers, it was the physical and mental exhaustion of guerrilla warfare in an impenetrable jungle that made victory seem unattainable (Lindsay, 2002, 35). The men endured when all seemed lost, carried through by mateship and the patriotic desire to defend their country. Private Kevin 'Spud' Whelan of the 39th Battalion believed, "When you have good friends, good mates, you don't leave them. It was a brotherhood. We were there to look after each other" (in Lindsay, 2002, 44). With the vital help of the native Papuan and New Guinean carriers, affectionately remembered as the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', the troops stopped the Japanese

within forty kilometres of Port Moresby on 11 November (Mason, 2002, 186). Australia suffered heavy losses of 913 men, but this time, the ANZAC spirit won the victory that the original ANZACs had never achieved. The ANZAC tradition of mateship and endurance displayed in Kokoda proved to the world that Gallipoli had not been in vain.

In East Timor, ongoing peacekeeping efforts since 1999 have once again gained Australians a reputation as inheritors of the ANZAC spirit after criticisms of delayed action. Before the regime change in Indonesia in May 1998, it was true that the government had subordinated moral principles to pragmatism. However, following the 1999 referendum in East Timor, in which an overwhelming majority chose independence, Australia organised and commanded a multi-national force, INTERFET, to intervene in the violent aftermath and insure that true democracy was accomplished. Of the 8000 personnel, Australia contributed the largest number of 4500 (Macdougall, 2004, 27). Commander of INTERFET, Australian Major-General Peter Cosgrove, gave an ANZAC Day address that was representative of Australia's policy reversal:

“...the Spirit of ANZAC lives on...It's the innate Australian quality of wishing that everybody could get a fair go. That everybody would have a chance to live their lives pretty much as they should; that nobody should be allowed to be bullied around by somebody who uses violence or oppression against them...I have seen them reach out a helping hand to Timorese of all ages and to extend that hand of friendship with a smile – ‘come on mate, I'll give you a hand’.”

The ANZAC spirit of fighting for a good cause and helping out a mate was extended beyond national interest to defending the human rights of the East Timorese.

Far from the military conflicts, the ANZAC tradition and spirit were also embedded in the daily lives of ordinary civilians who achieved extraordinary feats. John Simpson Kirkpatrick's legend at Gallipoli epitomised the ANZAC spirit (Cupper & Taylor, 2003, 27). Through individual initiative and that celebrated ingenuity in adversity, he made use of stray donkeys in place of the scarce stretchers. Twelve to fifteen trips a day, he worked alone under heavy Turkish fire to bring in the wounded (Cameron, 2000, 51). He was fearless, undeterred, and displayed courage beyond duty. After twenty-four days, and saving an estimated 300 lives, he was shot and killed on 19 May 1915, only twenty-two years old. The inscription on Simpson's headstone in Beach Cemetery at ANZAC Cove reads, “He gave his life that others may live” (in Armstrong, 2000, 32). This sacrifice became recognised by future generations as a sheer manifestation of the ANZAC spirit.

Fred Hollows carried on the tradition in his medical endeavours in the 1970s and 1980s. He was an ophthalmologist whose activities helped raise public awareness of the appalling neglect of Aboriginal health. He also worked extensively overseas with his medical teams, most notably in Nepal and Eritrea. He was an egalitarian who held the dictum that the “rich should not live longer simply because they are rich and can afford treatment, and the poor should not die prematurely simply because they are poor” (in ‘The Fred Hollows Foundation’, 2004, Online). Born into a working class family, he remained larrikin and plain speaking. What other professionals perceived as inappropriate was only his way of making himself accessible to his patients (Hollows, 1991, 259). The Fred Hollows Foundation continues his work today. Fred Hollows followed in the ANZAC tradition by maximising the advantages of his position to help the underprivileged.

In the sporting arena at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Jana Pittman's character underwent an emotional test. As a promising gold medallist, her daring Olympic dream was shattered by her nightmarish knee injury just before Athens (Sutcliffe, 2004, Online). Pittman still raced with an unrelenting spirit – she finished fifth. When questioned by the media, she refused to compromise the success of the winners to compensate for her loss: “I don't need

to make any excuses. Those girls were great out there today and they were better than me on the day...I don't want to take anything away from the girls that won tonight" (in Forage, 2004, Online). Pittman continued the long tradition of Australian sporting greats who embraced the ANZAC spirit in their respective endeavours. It was this consistency of determination and sportsmanship in defeat that gave the Australian audience a deeper admiration of Jana Pittman than if she had won gold.

Ninety years after the Gallipoli campaign, the ANZAC tradition and spirit are celebrated with more national pride than ever. At the original scene of bloodshed, ANZAC Cove attracts increasing numbers of visitors each year on 25 April for the Dawn Service, regardless of the dwindling numbers of war veterans. The ANZAC spirit is perpetuated in memorials, monuments, commemoration committees and services. There has been criticism of ANZAC Day commemorations being "an astute and cynical propaganda exercise" (in Andrews, 1993, 86), in which hero worship conveniently masked the real failure and suffering of the soldiers. On the contrary, what Australians celebrate today is not the romance of war, but the spirit born through trial and disaster, made all the more honourable by the horror, suffering and grief (Cameron, 2000, 50). ANZAC Day holds its resonance for Australians of all cultures. It is a day to recognise the price that had to be paid for Australians to enjoy the freedom and opportunity they take for granted; a day to remind all Australians to live true to their strength of character.

The enduring positive outcomes of the Gallipoli campaign were the elements of tradition and spirit that idealised the way Australians should live by: to rise in times of trial and endure despite certain defeat, to put others before self for a worthy cause, to be resourceful in hardship, to overcome hopelessness with good humour, and then, to be able to remember the past experiences with optimism and no regrets. From the two world wars to peacekeeping; from remote lands to the home front, Australia defended its tradition with commendable spirit. In the lives of everyday Australians, the flame has burned with equal intensity. For as long as Australia seeks to pass the flame of the ANZAC tradition and spirit onto the next generation, this flame will remain inextinguishable and prove its foundational truth in Australian society in trials and celebrations yet to come.

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