

## **RUNNER-UP — NORTHERN TERRITORY**

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*‘Consider what values and characteristics demonstrated by the Anzacs at Gallipoli and later reinforced at the Western Front, continue to influence Australians today.’*

It’s important to note that before the First World War in 1914, Australia was still very British, all the basic systems of education, law and government were founded on the British models, and there was an almost universal belief in the superiority of the white, English race. The legacy of a new sense of national consciousness and a coming of age for Australians began on the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1914. Their values and beliefs that, happiness and freedom are the right of all people; their conviction that there is good in everyone; and the larrikin attitude, ‘She’ll be right mate’ allowed them to show no sign of nervousness in manner, speech or action. The characteristics of courage, mateship, determination, resourcefulness and a sense of humour identify the Australian soldier, ‘Diggers’ as they were called. It took the Gallipoli campaign to resurrect these values and characteristics which the Diggers took and reinforced at the Western Front. These qualities of the Anzacs are today ‘alive and well’ in all Australians.

This sense of resilience that the experiences of Gallipoli and the Western Front gave to our nation can be seen in many heroic acts that have continued to take place in Australia today. These characteristics of courage, mateship, resourcefulness and the sense of humour came shining through with the miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb, whose ordeal began on Anzac Day 2006. They spent fourteen days entombed nearly one kilometre underground in a Beaconsfield mine in Tasmania. When rescued, they claimed that ‘their lives will never be the same’.

*“The air was thick with relief and mateship”<sup>1</sup>*

The Australian public prayed and Princess Mary of Denmark sent a message of hope.

*“To think that someone so far away can feel such a connection to her birthplace is really wonderful.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Territory News, Wednesday, May 10, 2006 pg 5

<sup>2</sup> New Idea, May 20, 2006 pg 10

Football and music stars came together to raise money to give the miners and their families a new start. Such is the Australian community spirit.

As well, we see the courage of a five year old girl, Sophia Delezio, who suffered horrific burns in an accident at kindergarten and later was hit by a car. Sophie's father, Ron, said:

***“If anyone will get through this, it’s Sophie. She’s proved once she’s got the will and fight in her, and she’ll prove it again.”***<sup>3</sup>

Also Danny Green, before his eliminator fight against Anthony Mundane at Aussie Stadium on May 17, 2006 states:

***“She’s [Sophie] what epitomises the true Aussie Spirit.”***<sup>4</sup>

***NSW [New South Wales] Premier Morris Iemma rang Ron and asked: ‘is there anything I can do for you, mate? Anything at all? The whole of Australia is praying for you.’***<sup>5</sup>

It was the first game on Anzac Day, more than forty years ago, that marked the beginning of a football season when Roy Masters wrote:

***“The atmosphere in a football dressing room before a big game is like people are going to war – but without the prospect of death...It’s an insult to the real soldiers who slept in the mud, wore lice-infected uniforms, ate weevil-ridden food and risked a bullet every time they lifted their heads above the trenches to compare their deeds with men who earn \$400:00 a game for playing the game they love. But war and sport do have linkages. At their root, they are both about sacrifice, although of very different kinds... A plaque ... memorialises the words of General Douglas Macarthur:” Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that, upon other fields on other days, will bear the fruits of victory.”***<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Pride in the Australian identity can be seen in those people who attended the Ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Long Tan on the remembrance day of the Vietnam War. Journalists Mark Dodd and Rowan Callick express similar sentiments:

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<sup>3</sup> New Idea, May 20, 2006 pg 20

<sup>4</sup> Ibid pg 23

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg 23

<sup>6</sup> Roy Masters, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 ‘Footballers have Anzac Spirit? Only if Anzac means crumbling like a biscuit’: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/roy-masters/footballers-have-anzac-spirit...html> 5/6/2006

*“The ceremony on a windy but sunny day in front of the Vietnam Memorial... [Commemorated] the battle of Long Tan ... fought in a rubber plantation south-east of Saigon by 108 Australian soldiers who were outnumbered 25 to one by Viet Cong troops. 18 Australians were killed and 24 wounded.”*<sup>7</sup>

*“Around Australia yesterday, thousands of Vietnam veterans and their supporters gathered for ceremonies to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Long Tan, near Vung Tau...It was Australia’s bloodiest battle of the war, with the country losing 18 soldiers over hours of brutal fighting against a force 10 times bigger.”*<sup>8</sup>

The characteristics of the Anzac spirit of courage, mateship and resourcefulness can also be found when the hundreds of Australian soldiers were farewelled in Darwin on August 20<sup>th</sup> 2006. Where Defence Minister Brendan Nelson told the troops their mission was dangerous but important to the global fight against terrorism. He said: *“We must stick with our allies and stand up for our values. If we don’t, we will leave the next generation hostage to global forces they will never control... All Australians should feel very proud of the members of the Australian Defence Force who are serving their country.”*<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the ANZAC spirit of never giving up in the face of adversity continues to be found in ordinary Australian people. My family think of themselves as ‘really’ Australian. I go to a rural Government High School in the Northern Territory. I interact regularly with my Australian peers. My family love Australia and embrace as much of the culture as they can. I would like to think that this Australian spirit can be transferred to my family and extended family. Before coming to Australia in the 1980’s, my family had to go through war-torn Cambodia from 1970-1979. Their objective was to escape to the border of Thailand but this was many miles away. Dodging bullets and trying to elude the Khmer Rouge, their survival depended on their courage and determination to just carry on, just like the Anzacs had to.

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<sup>7</sup>The Australian, Mark Dodd writes ‘Choppers mark salute to Long Tan vets’, dated 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2006, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/printpage/0,5942,20169811,00.html> , 22/08/2006

<sup>8</sup> The Australian , Rowan Callick writes ‘Vets relive days when they were only 19’ ,dated 19<sup>th</sup> August 2006 Ibid

<sup>9</sup> The N. T NEWS, August 20, 2006 ‘Afghanistan troops farewelled’, <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,20190876-17001,00.html> 22/08/2006

My family had to do things during war times, such as selling groceries and clothing to survive. When the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge Government, every citizen in Cambodia was free to resume their lives without fear of being punished. Nevertheless, people were still afraid, afraid of the Vietnamese because of their Communist status. Once more my family had to have courage and determination, to get to the border and finally escape. They too, like the Anzacs at Gallipoli, left during the night so that the Vietnamese couldn't see them.

In 1980, the determination of my family to escape their homeland paid off when Australia accepted us. We arrived in Australia in 1982 and our lives improved and changed considerably for the better.

We feel free and happy, having developed the 'True Blue Aussie Character'. This great country has a freedom that we continue to enjoy. Many Australian soldiers gave their lives for this freedom. My family and I have embraced the Australian identity. We are proud to call ourselves Australian.

In summary, it is now ninety one years since that fatal landing on the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsular in Turkey. There are numerous ordinary Australians who demonstrate these ANZAC characteristics of courage, mateship, conviction, sense of humour and resourcefulness. Let us hope these traits continue to be manifested generation after generation, ***LEST WE FORGET!***

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