



**The**

*a competition for*

**Simpson**

*year 9 and 10 students*

**Prize**

**2008 runner-up  
Victoria**

**Rebecca Free  
MacKillop College Swan Hill**

# *To what extent was Simpson a hero? How have his heroic qualities been demonstrated by other Australians since 1915?*

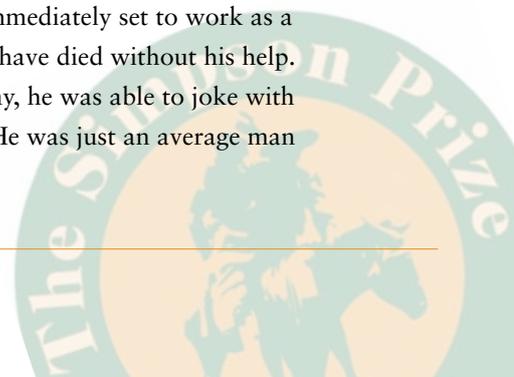
**by Rebecca Free, MacKillop College Swan Hill**

John Simpson Kirkpatrick braved his way in perilous conditions to save men he did not even know. This hero, better known as Simpson, he with his donkey, Murphy, were the quintessential pair who with many from the Australian Imperial forces portrayed heroic qualities in 1915. The courage and loyalty demonstrated by Simpson was a part of the Australian way of life which is still prominent today, although our lives have changed and some things of the past are no longer the same to us, I however, believe that many Australians would still risk their lives to save another, as Simpson bravely did.

When Simpson's father died, he found a new way of life on the high seas bringing him to the shores of Australia at the age of seventeen. Simpson started working on land but was never in one place for extended periods of time. In 1914 when he heard of the war between Great Britain and Germany; he signed up to fight for a country he had only spent four years of his life in.

Like Simpson who put his life on the line, Paul De Waard was given an international bravery award for throwing himself in front of a woman he did not know. He ended up losing almost ten litres of blood because of an unselfish response to save people. Although he was originally from Holland, he had been backpacking around Australia for eleven months; and after his great feat we have obviously accepted him as an Australian hero. Paul's brother Bart was quoted by the *Herald Sun* saying the experience of being in Australia had changed Paul. 'What he did sums up Paul – he wants to be there for everybody.' Paul was able to make a decision that led to his near death, just like Simpson did during his time in Gallipoli. '...he didn't realise the risk he was taking – he just jumped in,' this certainly illustrates that the heroic qualities and the Spirit of ANZAC are still prevalent in Australia today.

Arriving in Gallipoli on the 25th of April 1915, Simpson was immediately set to work as a stretcher bearer, he lived day by day saving soldiers who would have died without his help. Soon he was known all through out the camp and loved by many, he was able to joke with anyone he met and rebel against the command of his generals. He was just an average man



with an extraordinary heart and a lot of courage and initiative. Men that he saved offered him money and presents but Simpson never took the payment. 'Keep your blinking quid. I'm not doing this for the money.'

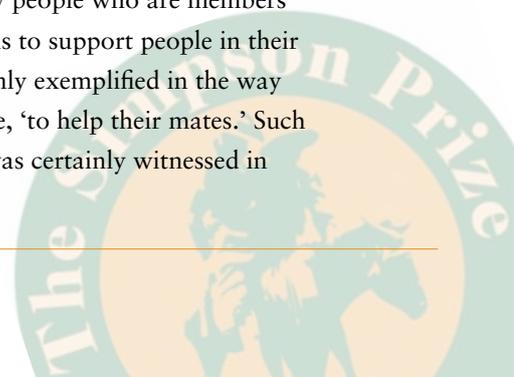
There are many unsung heroes saving our nation every day, people like 'Luke Coleman who saved a woman from a burning car; Hakan Taskun who stopped a dangerous attacker; Stephen Thomas who saved his friend from a shark and Lisa Strathern who helped trap a parachutist in midair, all risked their lives for the good of others.' Parents, family, friends and communities are the people that benefit from these heartfilled attempts at trying to keep their loved ones alive. People feel safer knowing that there are people out there that are willing to put their lives on the line to help a person in need.

Over Simpson's twenty four days at war he was recovering twelve to fifteen men a day, approximately three hundred and fifty were given a better chance than if they had been left out on the battle field to find their own way back. For me, it is difficult to comprehend the heartrenching trauma of standing in a field of death: I simply cannot imagine how one would feel. Then to go out and save men and bring them back to a safe place, and turn around and do it all again, having seen such horrors, shows an immense amount of courage and bravery. This was not the first consideration for Simpson, he simply responded to the situation, '...we weren't heroes, we were frightened, but we had a job to do.' This man has not received any formal bravery award, although he is a household name. The day after his death, commanding officers knew that Simpson deserved the Victorian Cross, but still today, all attempts have failed for this great man to receive any formal recognition.

Since Simpson and his heroic qualities, we have witnessed many deeds by both our service personnel and by ordinary citizens of Australia. The heroic spirit was further displayed in Kapyong Valley, Korea in 1951, when Australian troops stood in the way of the advancing Chinese army and forced them back. Again, in Vietnam in 1966 at the battle of Long Tan, which was a very difficult conflict, the Australian soldiers supported each other even when they were greatly outnumbered against the advancing Viet Cong attack.

In the fifty years of peacekeeping missions since World War Two, in Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Bougainville, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the days after the 2004 Tsunami in Asia, Australian military service men and women, as well as police and Australian volunteers, have earned a world-wide reputation for being extremely capable. They are recognised as generous and willing to give assistance to others and to risk their own lives. They have been prepared to get involved and 'do what is right.'

The Australian people are generous in assisting others after a disaster. We all know what it is like to suffer at the hands of nature because of the bushfires, floods and drought in this country. In towns and cities all around Australia, there are many people who are members of local CFA, SES and other community groups whose purpose is to support people in their local areas. (They are our unsung heroes.) Their feats are certainly exemplified in the way these people give up their own time, and in the dangers they face, 'to help their mates.' Such endurance and initiative is often shown in times of crisis. This was certainly witnessed in



2006 during the 'Beaconsfield Mine disaster' in Tasmania, where one miner was killed and two were trapped for fourteen days. These two men supported each other with their humour until the initiative, resourcefulness and efforts of their rescuers (who came from all over Australia) resulted in a safe rescue. Like Simpson and his donkey, they never gave up.

Simpson and the spirit of Anzac are all but gone, however they have left behind something that will never die. Their memories have not been buried in graves far from home, but have been implanted in our hearts forever. The characteristics of Simpson and his heroic deeds continue to influence and shape our lives and the Australian spirit will continue for many years to come. As Kemal Atatürk (President of the Turkish Republic and who fought at Gallipoli) wrote in a tribute in memory of the soldiers who fought against him:

*'Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives...  
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country.  
Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between  
the Johnnies and Mehmets to us where they lie side by  
side now here in this country of ours... You, the mothers,  
who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away  
your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are  
in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they  
have become our sons as well.'*



*Lest we forget – Simpson and Murphy*

Atatürk's reference points towards an enduring value reflected by the Australian diggers, that of dignity, honour, bravery and respect for human life – even for those of the enemy in the most trying of circumstances.

#### Endnotes

1. <<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,21949728-661,00.html>>
2. <<http://www.anzachouse.com/simpson.shtml>>
3. <<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,20655660-5005961,00.html>>
4. *Barrage*, September 2007, p. 23
5. <<http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/peacekeeping.htm>>
6. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa\\_Kemal\\_Ataturk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Kemal_Ataturk)>

#### Bibliography

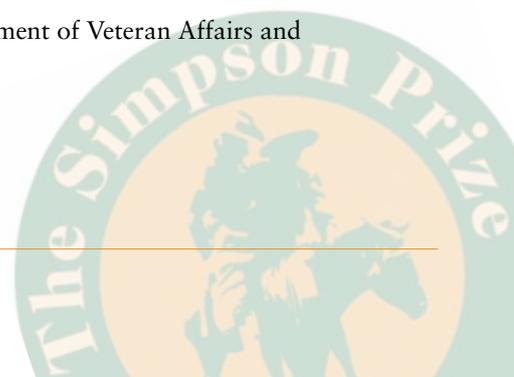
##### Books

Lewis, R and Gurry, T. *Australians At War*. Australia: Rybuck Media Pty Ltd (2002)

*Gallipoli and Australian Identity 1915–2000*. Australia: Department of Veteran Affairs and Rybuck Media Pty Ltd (2000)

##### Magazines

*Barrage*, September 2007



*Websites*

<<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,21949728-661,00.html>> ‘Dutch hero minutes from death’, Article from the *Herald Sun* on Paul De Waard

<<http://www.anzachouse.com/simpson.shtml>> John Simpson Kirkpatrick’ information on his life and quote

<<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,20655660-5005961,00.html>> ‘Bravery award for boy who saved dad’, *Herald Sun* article on people who received bravery awards

<[http://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node\\_id=1292007](http://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1292007)>

<<http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honoured/payne.cfm>>

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa\\_Kemal\\_Ataturk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Kemal_Ataturk)>

