



The

a competition for

Simpson

year 9 and 10 students

Prize

**2008 runner-up
Northern Territory**

**Zoe Whittington
Palmerston High School**

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

by Zoe Whittington, Palmerston High School

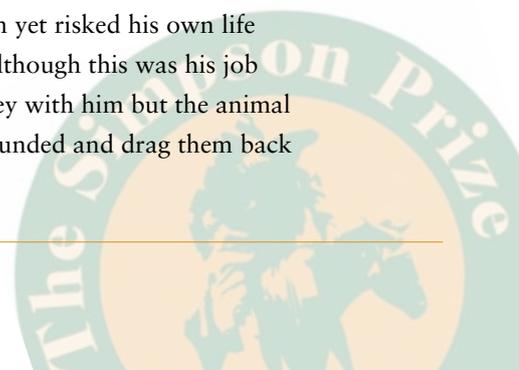
A hero has been defined in the Macquarie Dictionary as a man of distinguished courage or performance, admired for his noble qualities. In the 25 days John Simpson Kirkpatrick served on the Gallipoli Peninsula he displayed the moral character that made his efforts truly noble and himself worthy of the honour to be called a hero.

John Simpson Kirkpatrick was born on the 6th of July 1882 at South Shields, UK. He lived with his family in a poor neighbourhood, and with his merchant navy seafaring father often absent there wasn't much food around. He left school at 13 and went to work as a milk float boy. In 1908 he became a volunteer coastal defence Gunner with 4th Durham Battery.

John Simpson Kirkpatrick joined the Merchant Navy but then deserted in 1910 while the vessel was in Newcastle, Australia, after a trip from South America. He had a range of jobs while he tramped throughout the country including cane cutter and stoker on coastal vessels. In August of 1914 while in Perth he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces assuming this would give him a chance to get back to England to see his mother and sister before fighting in Europe. He enlisted as John Simpson to avoid any problems from having jumped ship years earlier. Possibly due to his high literacy and outstanding physical fitness, Simpson became a stretcher bearer as part of the 3rd field ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps.

'Simpson' was a reckless and careless man, and didn't follow many orders. He was instructed to recover and help the wounded with his Medical Corps mates, but showing initiative and realizing that his own significant strength would be assisted, he began using a donkey he had acquired on his first day at ANZAC Cove. He later named the donkey Murphy, and as people noticed his continuous trips to the front under fire they soon referred to him as the man with the donkey. These days he is known as 'Simpson and his donkey'.

As a part of the Medical Corps Simpson never carried a weapon yet risked his own life every time he went out to try and help the wounded soldiers. Although this was his job he made himself a bigger and slower target by having the donkey with him but the animal enabled him to do his job better. He would crawl out to the wounded and drag them back



to the donkey and sometimes grab a second person that he carried while returning to the field hospital. The actions of Simpson were considered heroic by those who benefited from them, by observers and later those who heard of his work.

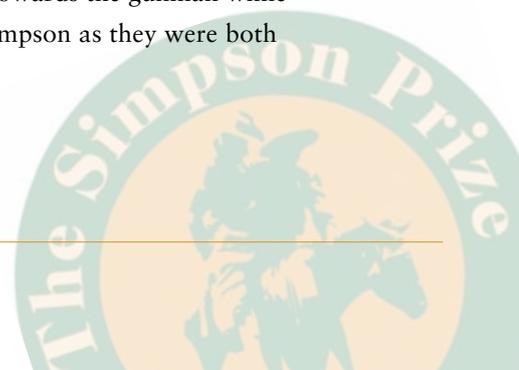
On the night of the 18 & 19 May the Turks started a violent attack on the Anzacs in a determined effort to get the Anzacs back to the beach. All that morning the battle raged as the Anzacs and their allies stood their ground. While all this was happening Simpson and his donkey continued to go out and help the wounded soldiers. It was later that morning towards the end of the attacks that Simpson was shot dead. When Simpson died he was on his way back to the medical area with two wounded soldiers on the donkey's back. The donkey must have done this trip many times to be able to get the wounded to aid without direction.

He was described as an original; fearless, big hearted, happy, lazy at times and a handful to his section Sergeant. It was this blend of the man that had Lord Moran describing him as 'the essence of courage'. Although he died within a short period of the Gallipoli campaign commencing, he is reported to have saved between 90 and 300 lives by getting them back to medical attention and clear of the front lines.

He wasn't trying to be a hero or seek glory for himself. He told off an Officer that offered him a cash reward for getting him to medical aid. He was an ordinary man, doing amazing things when it was dangerous and it might have cost him his life. These heroic qualities have been demonstrated by Australians from all backgrounds and throughout many civilian and military occupations since 1915.

In a military role we currently have the Special Air Service Regiment and 4 Commando Regiment risking their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting to protect people they don't know because it is the noble thing to do. During WWII my Great Uncle Claude was a member of the Field Ambulance in the Pacific Campaign. He served with front line troops to get them back to aid posts during battles. He paid the supreme sacrifice during the battle of Porton on Bougainville. He put himself in harms way to rescue his mates from the shark infested waters after the Japanese swam out and attacked their landing craft. His body was not recovered. The selfless acts of Australian troops throughout the years continue to demonstrate Simpson's heroic qualities can be found in many people.

Police work in our communities to protect people and sometimes have to put their own lives at risk to stop an offender or rescue people from flooded rivers. My Dad and his partner had been taking steel bars, machetes and star pickets off gang members during a riot at Port Keats when one Aboriginal man brought out a shotgun and fired it at another gang member. Dad ran towards him and had to shoot him in the arm so he dropped the shotgun and didn't fire at any more people. This is what we expect of police because they are meant to help us and go and stop the criminals. Running towards the gunman while everyone else was running away showed qualities similar to Simpson as they were both helping people while in danger.



The Fire Service people are always putting their life at risk in order to save people who are in burning buildings or trapped in vehicles after an accident. Prison guards have to deal with criminals on a daily basis and sometimes these people try to hurt each other and the guards. Doctors and nurses often work along with soldiers and Police in war zones and rough towns to try and save people. Some hospitals are close to the fighting and the medical staff are at risk from the same dangers as the soldiers.

Heroic qualities of determination, daring and putting the safety of others before concerns for themselves, are demonstrated continuously in Australian society by people pushing themselves to excel. They are doing what needs to be done to give us a safer society.

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