

DAWN SERVICE REMEMBRANCE ADDRESS 2009

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THE SUN IS NOW DAWNING ON THIS 94TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE – OF PRIDE IN OUR NATION’S SOLDIERS AND OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER— OF MATESHIP, GENEROSITY - OF INDOMINITABLE SPIRIT.

OUR ANZAC DAY.

ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL ANZACS ARE GONE NOW, THE TRADITION WHICH THEY CREATED, THE QUALITIES OF COMRADESHIP, SELF-SACRIFICE, ENDURANCE, RESOURCEFULNESS, LEGENDARY COURAGE, UNFLINCHING DEPENDABILITY IN THE MOST EXTREME OF CIRCUMSTANCES, BOYISH ENTHUSIASM AND CHEEKY, LARRIKIN - LIKE ATTITUDE TO LIFE; CONTINUE TO INSPIRE THE PEOPLE OF THIS NATION OF OURS AND SET A STANDARD FOR US ALL: AN EXAMPLE TO CARRY INTO OUR DAILY LIVES.

AS SIR WALTER CAMPBELL, ONE OF OUR PAST AND GREAT QLD GOVERNORS AND WORLD WAR II VETERAN, SO APTLY PUT IT,

“THE ANZACS ARE REVERED AS THE MODELS OF THE PEOPLE WE ASPIRE TO BE.”

WHAT WERE THESE FEATS OF OUR WORLD WAR I SOLDIERS THAT WERE SO AWESOME? THERE IS TIME TO MENTION JUST TWO. BOTH WERE SO-CALLED SIDESHOWS - FEINTS TO DRAW THE ENEMY AWAY FROM ANOTHER ATTACK ELSEWHERE. THE FIRST IS THE BATTLE FOR LONE PINE, AT GALLIPOLI. AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS CHARGED OVER 100 YARDS OF OPEN GROUND, ONLY TO FIND THAT THE TURKS’ OPEN TRENCHES NOW HAD OVERHEAD COVER. PINE LOGS COVERED WITH EARTH. WITH BAYONETS AND BARE HANDS; WITH UNBELIEVABLE TENACITY AND COURAGE - AND UNDER INTENSE FIRE FROM A SECOND ROW OF ENEMY TRENCHES LESS THAN 100 YARDS AWAY - THEY DUG THEIR WAY THROUGH THE EARTH, THREW THE LOGS ASIDE AND DROPPED INTO THE TRENCHES TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY IN HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING - AND TO SUCCESS.

HOWEVER, IN AN AREA THE SIZE OF JUST TWO FOOTBALL FIELDS, AUSTRALIA LOST 2,273 OF ITS FINEST SONS. SEVEN OF THE NINE VC'S AWARDED TO OUR TROOPS AT GALLIPOLI WERE AWARDED FOR THIS ACTION.

THE SECOND BATTLE THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION WAS FROMELLES – SO TOPICAL TODAY AS THEY DISCOVER THE LONG-FORGOTTEN MASS GRAVES OF OUR AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS THERE. IT WAS THE FIRST ACTION SEEN BY THE A.I.F ON THE WESTERN FRONT. ONCE AGAIN, THE ENEMY, THIS TIME THE GERMANS, WERE LITTLE MORE THAN 100 YARDS AWAY, OVER BARE, OPEN GROUND. 5,533 AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS GAVE THEIR LIVES THAT DAY. THIS IS MORE THAN ALL THE DEAD FROM THE BOER WAR, THE KOREAN AND VIETNAM CONFLICTS COMBINED. THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL CALLS THIS THE WORST 24 HOURS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.

THE GERMANS KNEW THEY WERE COMING AND WHEN THE ATTACK WAS POSTPONED FOR 24 HOURS, THEY HELD UP PLACARDS SAYING, “WHERE WERE YOU? WE WERE EXPECTING YOU?”

NOT ONLY WERE THE GERMAN MACHINE GUNS TO THE FRONT, THEY WERE ALSO TO THE SIDE, CATCHING THE AUSTRALIANS IN A MURDEROUS LATTICE OF CROSSFIRE. OUR SOLDIERS KNEW THAT THE GERMANS WERE WAITING FOR THEM AND YET, WITHOUT HESITATION, CHARGED DEFIANTLY ACROSS THE OPEN GROUND TO ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH. **WHY?**

AN AUSTRALIAN GENERAL ONCE SAID TO ME THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE COMMANDED A BATTALION OF JAPANESE SOLDIERS AS THEY WERE NOT AFRAID TO DIE. HE WAS NOT THE PERSON THAT ONE WOULD DISAGREE WITH OPENLY, BUT I BELIEVE THAT HE WAS WRONG. TRAINING THAT GETS A SOLDIER TO THE POINT WHERE HE IS NOT AFRAID TO DIE, DIMINISHES HIS CAPACITY FOR INDIVIDUAL THOUGHT AND ACTION. HE BECOMES SOMEWHAT OF AN AUTOMATON AND THAT DOES NOT MAKE FOR A GOOD SOLDIER.

OUR SOLDIERS WERE ALWAYS AFRAID OF DEATH, BUT THERE WAS A BOND BETWEEN THEM SO STRONG, SO ALL-POWERFUL, THAT IT OVERCAME THIS NATURAL, PRIMAEVIL FEAR OF DEATH. IT WAS MATESHIP – BROTHERLY LOVE – SO STRONG - SO INTENSE, THAT

THERE WERE NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF CASUALTIES FROM THE WESTERN FRONT WITH WOUNDS SEVERE ENOUGH FOR THE DOCTORS TO STRONGLY RECOMMEND THEIR RETURN TO AUSTRALIA - TO THEIR WIVES AND LOVED ONES. BUT THE SOLDIERS RETURNED TO THE FRONT, TO THEIR MATES – TO THE 60 MEN LEFT IN THEIR ORIGINAL BATTALION OF 600 – BACK TO THE INTENSE COLD – THE APALLING CONDITIONS – THE DISEASE – THE SLAUGHTER - THE HELL THAT WAS TRENCH WARFARE. WHY? QUITE SIMPLY, BECAUSE **THEY COULD NOT - WOULD NOT - LET THEIR MATES DOWN.**

WHERE DID THIS BOND OF MATESHIP, FORGED SO STRONGLY IN THE TRENCHES OF WW I; FORGED SO INTENSELY THAT IT IS FOREVER ETCHED INTO OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER– OUR NATIONAL PSYCHE– THAT IS STILL STRONG IN OUR SERVING SOLDIERS TODAY. WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

TO UNDERSTAND THIS, WE MUST GO BACK 100 YEARS TO OUR EARLY HISTORY. OUR FOREBEARS WERE TOUGH PIONEERING STOCK, LIVING ON FARMS OR IN SMALL TOWNS, WORKING HARD, RELYING ON EACH OTHER FOR HELP AND IN TURN HELPING EACH OTHER CHEERFULLY AND WITHOUT QUESTION. THEN CAME WW I AND AN OFTEN FORGOTTEN FACT. THAT UNITS WERE RAISED BY LOCALITY. THE 25TH BATTALION, RAISED RIGHT HERE AT ENOGGERA, BECAME THE DARLING DOWNS REGIMENT, THE 51ST BATTALION BECAME THE FAR NORTH QLD REGIMENT AND SO ON.....

THIS MEANT THAT SOLDIERS, FIGHTING SIDE BY SIDE, HAD KNOWN EACH OTHER ALL THEIR LIVES; FROM THE FARM NEXT DOOR OR OVER THE RIDGE. THEY HAD BEEN SCHOOL FRIENDS TOGETHER; STRUGGLED TOGETHER THROUGH DROUGHTS AND FLOODS ----- **THEY WERE MATES ALREADY.** EVEN MORE SO, MANY IN THE SAME UNIT WERE BLOOD RELATIONS. COUSINS, UNCLES, FATHERS, BROTHERS, SONS – ALL SERVING IN THE ONE UNIT.

IT WAS THESE LIFE-LONG TIES OF NEIGHBOURS AND BROTHERS, TOGETHER WITH THAT HARD, RESOURCEFUL PIONEERING MENTALITY, THAT HELPED FORM THESE BONDS OF MATESHIP. BONDS THAT TRANSCENDED ANY FEAR OF DEATH - AND ALTHOUGH IT

PROVIDES, TO THIS DAY, THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR NATIONAL CULTURE, IT CAME WITH A FEARSOME LEGACY. IN THE TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER THAT WAS LONE PINE - AND FROMELLES - AND PASCHENDALE - AND A DOZEN OTHER LIKE CONFLICTS, IT WAS NOT UNHEARD OF FOR A MOTHER TO BE GIVEN THE NEWS THAT SHE HAD LOST HER HUSBAND, A BROTHER AND TWO SONS IN ONE BATTLE. WHOLE FAMILIES OF MEN, GONE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE; WHOLE DISTRICTS, DENUDED OF THEIR MEN OVERNIGHT.

NEVER AGAIN WILL AUSTRALIAN UNITS BE COMPRISED OF FATHERS, SONS AND BROTHERS. NEVER AGAIN WILL THEY BE DRAWN FROM THE ONE DISTRICT. BUT THE BONDS OF MATESHIP THAT WERE FORGED AND ALL THE VIRTUES THAT FOLLOW FROM SUCH A BOND, SELF SACARAFICE, LOYALY, COURAGE UNDER FIRE, STILL REMAIN WITH OUR SOLDIERS TO THIS VERY DAY AND SERVE AS A SHINING EXAMPLE TO OUR NATION.

SOME SAY THE ANZAC SPIRIT IS DYING. I CANNOT SPEAK WITH FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF TODAY'S SOLDIERS BUT I SERIOUSLY DOUBT IT. WHAT I CAN SAY, IS THAT I SAW IT ALIVE AND WELL WHEN I WAS IN VIETNAM.

AS ENOGGERA AND THIS GROVE – THIS MEMORIAL WALK - IS THE SPIRITUAL HOME OF 6RAR, IT IS FITTING TO TELL OF AN INCIDENT THAT OUR WORLD WAR I SOLDIER ANCESTORS WOULD VIEW WITH SATISFACTION AND APPROVAL.

AT THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN, SOME OF THE MANY OUTSTANDING ACTS OF HEROISM WERE SEEN IN THE CONDUCT AND ACTIONS OF WO II, JACK KIRBY. JACK WAS THE CSM OF DELTA COMPANY AND DURING THE WHOLE BATTTLLE, WHICH LASTED SEVERAL HOURS, CONTINUALLY SUPPLIED BELTS OF AMMUNITION AND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SOLDIERS IN THE FRONT LINE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CARRYING BACK ANY CASUALTIES THAT HE FOUND, TO RELATIVE SAFETY IN THE REAR. HIS WAS A MAGNIFICENT EXAMPLE OF COOLNESS UNDER FIRE, COURAGE AND LEADERSHIP TO HIS SOLDIERS. IN ORDER TO FULLY COMPREHEND THE EXTRAORDINARY GALLANTRY OF HIS ACTIONS, ONE MUST VISUALISE JACK RUNNING AROUND FULLY UPRIGHT, WITH COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR THE WITHERING ENEMY FIRE. SOME SAY, AT TIMES, WITH BELTS OF AMMUNITION OVER ONE SHOULDER AND A CASUALTY OVER THE OTHER – IN FIRE THAT WAS SO INTENSE

THAT ONE SIGNALLER'S AERIAL, WHICH IS ABOUT 6 FEET LONG AND A LITTLE THICKER THAN A PENCIL – WAS SHOT AWAY . NOT ONCE BUT **TWICE**. THE ENEMY WEREN'T SHOOTING AT THE AERIAL, IT JUST HAPPENED TO GET IN THE WAY. AND JACK, THE GENTLE GIANT, AT 6 FEET 3 INCHES AND 110KG WAS NO SMALL TARGET. IT WAS A MIRACLE THAT JACK CAME THROUGH THE ENTIRE BATTLE, COMPLETELY UNSCATHED.

TO MY MIND, HIS ACTIONS WERE IN THE FINEST TRADITIONS OF SOLDIERING AND TOTALLY WORTHY OF THE VICTORIA CROSS. HE WAS AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

SEVERAL MONTHS LATER, WHILE ON AN OPERATION IN PHUOC-TUY PROVINCE, TWO ROUNDS OF ARTILLERY FIRE FROM 161 BATTERY, MISTAKENLY LANDED ON DELTA COMPANY HEADQUARTERS. JACK TOOK A PIECE OF SCHRAPNEL, AT HIGH VELOCITY THROUGH THE CHEST AND PASSED AWAY IN MY ARMS, WITHIN MINUTES.

JACK EMBODIED, AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, THE ANZAC SPIRIT OF OUR WARRIOR ANCESTORS. I OFTEN PONDER THE ARBITRARY SENSELESSNESS OF WAR. TO MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVE THE OVERWHELMINGLY INTENSE, DIRECTED FIRE OF LONG TAN FOR SEVERAL HOURS ONLY TO SUCCUMB IN A HEARTBEAT, TO A STRAY PIECE OF SCHRAPNEL FROM FRIENDLY FIRE, DEFIES ALL LOGIC.

PERHAPS HIS MENTORS: HIS SOLDIER COMRADES FROM AN EARLIER WAR, COULD NOT WAIT THE PASSAGE OF TIME TO WELCOME HIM INTO THEIR COLLECTIVE BOSOM.

EACH YEAR, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, WE – THE INHERITORS OF THE LEGACY OF THE ANZACS, GATHER IN SMALL GROUPS SUCH AS THIS – RIGHT AROUND THE NATION, TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SACRIFICE AND TO RENEW OUR PLEDGE NOT TO SQUANDER THE MONUMENTAL BENEFITS THAT, THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS, THEY HAVE SECURED FOR US. WE ENJOY IN THIS GREAT LAND OF OURS - AND HOPEFULLY WILL NEVER TAKE FOR GRANTED - A LIFESTYLE THAT IS THE ENVY OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. WE HAVE

FREEDOM – NOT SLAVERY; PROSPERITY - NOT POVERTY; HEALTH AND PLENTY - NOT DISEASE AND STARVATION. WE ENJOY THESE AT THE ENORMOUS COST OF THE LIVES OF OUR NATION'S FINEST.

IT IS OUR SOLEM DUTY, TO UPHOLD THE ANZAC SPIRIT, TO ATTEMPT AT ALL TIMES, TO EMULATE THEIR VIRTUES OF MATESHIP, COURAGE AND FAIR PLAY. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO DISHONOUR THEIR MEMORY; TO DIMINISH THEIR MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENTS.

AND ALWAYS - **ALWAYS** TO REMEMBER THEM..... WITH AWE AND WITH PRIDE.