

ANZAC DAY 2013 - SOUTHPORT

by Judge C F Wall RFD**, Q.C., District Court, Southport, Air Commodore, RAAF, Deputy Judge Advocate General, Australian Defence Force (24 August 2006 to 31 December 2008)

- [1] Jim, the old Gallipoli digger said

“We are not really meant for war. We lose sight of who we are. We become automated somehow. Machines really.... programmed to kill or be killed. We lose our humanity for a while. It’s the best way to survive.... so we do what we have to do. There is no questioning, you just do it.”

- [2] Anzac Day commemorates the 1915 dawn landing by an Australian and New Zealand force, part of a British-led campaign to seize the Gallipoli peninsula. The campaign failed after 8 months leaving 8,709 Australians and 2,721 New Zealanders dead.

- [3] The campaign helped to forge Australia’s national identity. Fighting at Gallipoli would become our national symbol of courage and sacrifice. Of this campaign Jim, the old digger said

“The war to end all wars. Where this country was blooded and where we learned what it was like to fight for your mates. Where we saw what man is not supposed to see and did what man is not supposed to do.”

- [4] But Anzac Day is more than a commemoration of that campaign. The day also allows us to commemorate our servicemen and women who fought in subsequent wars and conflicts including World War 2, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. We should always remember – and this is also what today is about – subsequent ANZAC’s who have followed in the footsteps of those at Gallipoli. Today remembers more than those who were at Gallipoli.

- [5] Today I want to talk about our closest conflict.

- [6] 2 November 2012 was the 70th anniversary of the re-taking of Kokoda Village. The Australian flag was raised there on 3 November 1942.
- [7] The Japanese intended to advance across the Owen Stanley Ranges and capture Port Moresby. Japanese troops landed in Buna and Gona in early July and struck out along the road towards Kokoda. They captured Kokoda. Australia's only link between Port Moresby and Kokoda was the old mail route which became known as the Kokoda Trail.
- [8] The Kokoda campaign commenced on 27 July 1942 when the Japanese attacked a small Australian and Papuan force on the Kokoda Plateau and concluded when the Japanese were driven across the Kumusi River on 21 November 1942. At the beginning of the campaign Australia's fate hung in the balance. We were fighting for our national survival. Japan had already printed currency for Australia – headed Japanese Government of Australia.
- [9] Charlie Lynn has said that
- “Kokoda tested young men's endurance beyond known limits”.
- [10] After the war was over Emperor Hirohito said
- “I knew we had lost when we failed to hold the Stanley Mountain Range in 1942”.
- [11] Kokoda has lived in the shadow of Gallipoli but Kokoda was a battle for Australia, Gallipoli wasn't.
- [12] By the time of the Japanese surrender at Wewak in 1945 more Australians had been killed in action in Papua New Guinea than had lived in the territory before the war began.
- [13] In the Gold Coast Magazine for March/April 2013 Bluey Smith who fought in Papua New Guinea is reported as saying

“Your first experiences are always the hardest part of war. It’s nothing like at the movies, it’s fair dinkum.”

- [14] In the Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby more than 3,800 Australian soldiers are buried in easily the largest Australian war grave in the world.
- [15] Kokoda is a seminal moment in Australian history and we should not forget this.
- [16] A friend of mine, Malcolm Weatherup, a retired journalist has described ANZAC day in the following terms

“Anzac Day is a timely reminder that we will never forget any brave person who made the ultimate sacrifice to secure the uncertain but vibrant world we live in today. Many may be less than happy with what they see in the world right now, but because of those who went before, at least we can still argue, bicker, be represented and have our say and never be dominated by tyranny. Lest we ever forget that.”

Lest we forget