



SENATOR  
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# THE REYNOLDS REPORT

## My Anzac Journey

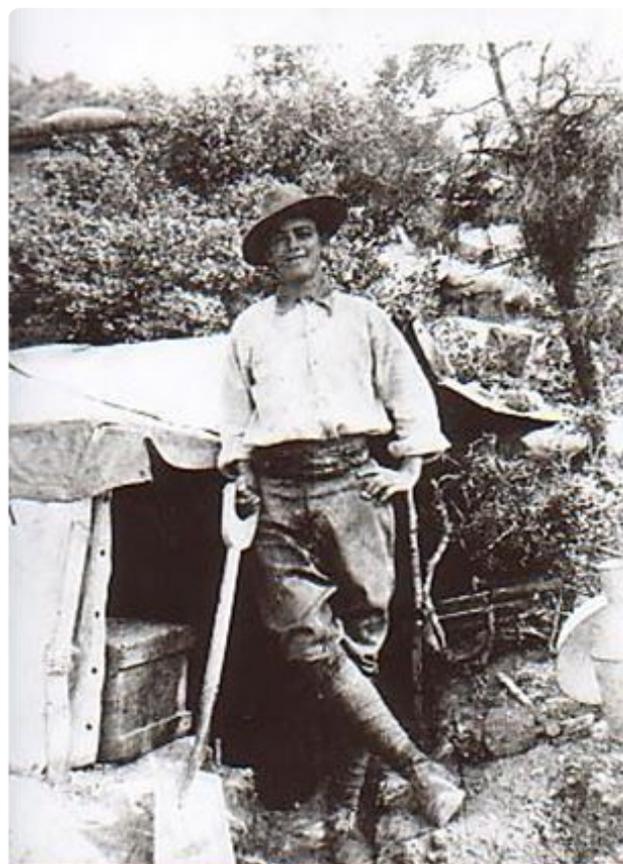


**Today the Prime Minister shared his reflections on Anzac Day 2015. This evening in the Senate I will also share my experiences following my family's pilgrimage to Gallipoli for the Anzac Centenary Commemorations. It was a trip we will always remember and cherish. It has also given me much to reflect on as a Senator. Although Australia's eyes have turned to the Federal Budget today, I would like to share the story with you. You can watch my address live at around 9pm AEST this evening by clicking [here](#).**

ON Anzac Day, Saturday April 25, 2015 hundreds of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders came together, not to commemorate victories or defeats in war, but to honour and remember the courage and selfless sacrifice made by our service men and women, past and present.



My grandfather Alfred George Reynolds was one of the young soldiers who departed Albany in the first convoy on 1 November 1914. He was a Third Field Ambulance medic, who against the odds, served not only at Gallipoli, but through the Western Front, Fromelles, Somme, Pozieres, Ypres and Amiens. Unlike so many of his mates, he returned alive. He returned home in good physical health, but mentally scarred. My grandfather rarely talked about his experiences and neither valued nor kept reminders of war.



After the war, he went on to do many things in his long life in Western Australia. He married twice and had seven children. He was a wool classer, a sheep and wheat farmer in Mukinbudin, an accountant in Albany and even a politician in State Parliament. His story is one of the many now shared in the Albany ANZAC Centre.

My dad, Laith and I, were two of the 10,000 Australians and New Zealanders

successful in the ballot for the opportunity to participate in the Gallipoli Centenary Commemorations. Joining us were my brothers Andrew and Cameron.

This was my first organised tour and none of us were sure what to expect on an 8 day bus tour, being four of 2,000 booked with our tour operators. They were up to the challenge and my family and 20 other Aussies and Kiwis became Bus A214. We were a wonderfully mixed group, sharing our diverse and interesting family stories.



After the official commemorations had concluded, and the world's eyes had moved away from Gallipoli, my family and I continued to tour battlefields, to gain a greater understanding of the Gallipoli campaign.

We were fortunate on our bus to have award winning journalist and author Chris Masters as our historian who skilfully brought the campaign to life, as did our irrepressible local Turkish guide Sukar. Many tears were shed by myself and others at the wonderful and moving ceremonies at ANZAC Cove and Lone Pine.

As a family, we were hoping in Gallipoli to gain a greater understanding of what my grandfather experienced and fill in large gaps in our knowledge of his service. We have fragments - his utter dismay at the Simpson mythology, his unfavourable

impression of Pommy officers, his belief that shell shock was a medical condition, not cowardice, and his keen appreciation of French women. In retrospect, the most visible evidence of war, which bewildered his children, was his anger and life long battle with what we call today Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.



My own memories of my grandfather are scant, because he was already old when I was a child. Sadly, he passed away before I was able to ask the questions I, and other family members, now have. One of the most wonderful things I will remember is the stories that were shared, not only my Grandfather's, but the many others we heard.

Strangers shared their stories on aeroplanes, in cafés, in hotel lobbies, and on the grass at ANZAC Cove- We all had a strong common bond and our pride was clear. While many made the pilgrimage to honour family members, others could not find the words to explain why they felt compelled to make the journey- they just knew they had to.

The rows of heartbreaking messages placed by grieving family members on grave stones will stay with me forever. They paid a penny and a half per line to both capture the life and death of their loved one, and try to make sense of their loss.



Sadly, the lives of so many of these men, who loved and were loved, are already lost to time, and their stories will not be remembered. While not all will be individually remembered, through the actions of an increasing number of family members and historians, many more will now be remembered and their stories passed on, and not just in ways we would anticipate.

I met two brothers at the Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, who were locating and individually dressing the grave stones of every man their grandfather, a Chaplain at Gallipoli, had buried. The effort they went to personalise each grave stone and the respect they showed, was incredibly moving.

For 100 years we have said “Lest We Forget” at the end of the ode to remembrance. But I, and I am sure others, have not always fully appreciated this solemn caution to us all. Not to forget the service and sacrifice of our returned service men and women and not to forget the lessons of war.

An anonymous Australian school child’s note at Lone Pine poignantly captured it with the words, “to all the soldiers who’s stories are untold (love heart) sending love and thoughts.”

Whether by action or design, the Centenary is not only providing an opportunity to collectively commemorate service to our nation, but it is also encouraging families and historians to capture and preserve individual stories.



On Anzac Day, all across the world, shrines, cenotaphs and war cemeteries were filled with wreaths, photos, mementoes and importantly, more and more stories and memories of individual soldiers. None of us can ever truly understand what our returned service men and women experienced. That is reserved solely for those who have been to war.

Hearing the voices and reading the stories of Gallipoli veterans and walking the ground with my father and brothers on the same ground my grandfather did 100 years ago, provided us a greater insight into what he may have endured. I hope this has also helped my father better understand his father's anger, and find a modicum of peace from the trip.

The most emotional image I took away, was observing my father's silent contemplations on his own father at Beach Cemetery, where he first came ashore on that fateful pre-dawn landing.



My heartfelt thanks go to the hundreds of Australian and New Zealand staff and volunteers, Ministers, War Memorial staff, and all the others who made this commemoration possible. You did an extraordinary job and delivered an experience none who attended will ever forget.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also does a wonderful job, quietly tending equally to all those who never came home. The Turks generosity of spirit in supporting our commemorations, an invasion of their land, says so much about them as a nation and brings to life Ataturk's famous words to Australian mothers whose sons lie forever on their soil.

Lest we Forget means not only remembering the lessons of war, but also capturing and sharing the individual stories of those who served, so their families can individually remember and honour them. As a nation we can then commemorate them all.

So much to reflect on, *Lest We Forget*.



Team Reynolds at the Dawn Ceremony in Perth.

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