

## Chapter 2

# The ANZAC Spirit \* Courage

*“It’s uplifting to see these stories of ordinary people who found themselves in circumstances and then overcame their fears to do something quite outstanding. And most of them were very humble about it subsequently.”* (General Steve Gower – director AWM)



### **Courage - A Spiritual Force**

The first granite monument at the battle site of Isurava bears the simple inscription **COURAGE**. I often have the privilege and honour of speaking in schools, youth groups, business groups and churches and whenever I do I like to ask them, “So, what can we learn from these courageous young ‘ANZACS’?”

**Firstly we can take a lesson from their courage.** True, the battle we face in the nation today may not be a physical one, we may not be staring down the face of an invading army, but the threat we face is no less real than the one these young Diggers faced. There are forces at work that would seek to destroy our freedom and the things these young ANZACS fought and died for. What things? Things we value – marriage, our homes and our family values. Our freedom of speech, our Christian heritage. Indeed the very things our nation was founded upon are now being threatened!

**Yes, courage is very much a part of the ANZAC Spirit, the spirit that enabled our forefathers to overcome against such horrendous odds. And it’s desperately needed today.**

**An interesting word ‘courage’ – but do we understand what it even means? Does it mean a complete lack of fear or what? Let’s look to the Kokoda campaign for some insight.**

“The Japanese South Seas Island force was assigned to capture Port Moresby. It comprised 13,000 of Japan’s finest troops and was commanded by Major General Horii Tomitaro. They were the elite of the Japanese army and were well blooded in battle. But even more important was the Japanese psyche which had been conditioned by a number of factors over generations. The first was their State religion, Shinto, which inculcated respect for the Emperor, the Head of the Japanese family, and respect for one’s ancestors. All Japanese authorities - religious, educational and media - indoctrinated the population with the divinity of the Emperor and the divine nature of Japan’s expansionist role. The second was the fact that they lived in a land of earthquakes and were therefore fatalistic and continually reminded of the need to meet death in a fitting manner. Austerity was praised and linked to the warrior spirit: And lastly, Japan’s military successes, ancient and modern, were credited to this offensive spirit. Japanese folklore contained many examples of heroic victory by trickery, which negated an opponent’s strength. These factors, particularly belief in a divine mission, combined to result in brutality to populations and prisoners in occupied lands.” (Lex MacAuley *‘To The Bitter End’*).

In January 1942 the Australian militia arrived in steamy Pt Moresby – their almost impossible task would be to hold the line alone for 9 months, until help arrived from the regular Australian Army. These young men of the 39th and 53rd Battalions were sarcastically nicknamed ‘chocos’ or chocolate soldiers, thinking they would melt in the sun. Yet untrained and completely unsuited to this type of warfare, wracked with dysentery and other diseases, totally unnumbered by a hitherto undefeated invading force of Japanese (the Japanese outnumbered the Australians at least 10:1 at Kokoda and at least 3:1 at the battle of Isurava) these young Aussies stopped their foes in their tracks and inflicted one of the first defeats on the feared and much vaunted Japanese Army.

*Japanese battle-flag captured by Australians.*



The Japanese reported there were some 1000-1200 Australian troops opposing them, where in fact a mere 77 Australian troops fought in the first battle of Kokoda. But the Japanese force, comprising crack troops from the Nankai Shitai invasion force, soon learned to have a healthy respect for their Australian foes. **‘Fellow soldiers who had come up against the Australians in Lae and Salamau said they were skilled marksmen, more dangerous than the Americans.’** (*The Path of Infinite Sorrow*’ by Craig Collie and Hajime Marutani).

A small force of Australians known as ‘Maroubra Force’ arrived at Buna on July 21st, 1942, at the same time a Japanese force of 1500 men had landed a few miles away at Gona. What followed would change our nation forever; the heroic action of these few Diggers is now etched in the annals of military history.

A few days later the first contact between the Japanese and the young Aussies took place and as the Australian force was hopelessly outnumbered they began a long fighting withdrawal along the now famous ‘Kokoda Track’.



*Japanese soldiers, pic taken from soldier killed on Kokoda Track*

Despite their valiant efforts (they even recaptured the plateau after being driven out) the overwhelming Japanese force pushed the Australians back towards Port Moresby. Through Isurava, Alola, Templeton's Crossing, Myola, Efogi, Menari and Nauro until a final stand was made at Ioribaiwa Ridge. For the young Australians this was the place they were ordered to stand and fight to the death.

From August 26 to September 16th Maroubra Force, consisting of the 2/16th Battalion, together with the 2/14th, the 2/27th (my Uncle Alf Atkinson's unit), the 39th militia and scattered elements of the ill-trained 53rd Battalion, outnumbered and outgunned they fought the Japanese to an eventual standstill on the ridges overlooking Port Moresby.

The conditions these men fought under were horrendous. It rained constantly; the weary men endured some of the most difficult terrain in the world as well as being racked by malaria and dysentery. Though outnumbered, outgunned, sick and tired this courageous force



of ANZACS continually placed themselves between Major General Horri's Japanese South Sea Force and Port Moresby – defending, retreating and then counterattacking. They kept fighting, making the enemy pay dearly for every yard of ground they took.

Lt. Col. Honner DSO MC, who commanded the gallant 39th in the campaign, later wrote of these men in the foreword to Peter Brune's book *Those Ragged Bloody Heroes*: **“They have joined the immortals.” Of those that did not survive, he wrote: “Wherever their bones may lie, the courage of heroes is consecrated in the hearts and engraved in the history of the free.”**

### **Isurava**

One of the most strategic battles of the bloody campaign was fought at Isurava (where the Memorial stands today). Here 1800 ANZACS (600 untrained militia and 1200 regular AIF) faced 6000 highly trained, battle-hardened Japanese. **“Isurava could be Australia's Thermopalye”**, wrote Lt-Col. Ralph Honner describing of the battle. While the Japanese commander Major General Horii Tomitaro wrote: **“The Nankai Shitai...have succeeded in completely surrounding the Australian forces...the annihilation of these Australians is near, but there are still some remnants...and their fighting spirit is extremely high.”**

Tojo's screaming warriors assaulted the Australian positions day and night. The fighting was brutal, often hand-to-hand combat carried out at night and in torrential rain. “At sunset a chant, a primitive dirge, rose from the jungle below. It paused, then a Japanese voice shouted: ‘That should frighten you!’ The Australians swore back...then through the cloud the Japanese came as the screams of Tsukamoto's warriors split the night...” (*Kokoda* by Paul Ham).

The ‘Banzai’ yelling Japanese attacked in waves, they charged the Australian with fixed bayonets, the attacks lasting all day. The Australians fought back with everything they had, Bren guns, rifles, bayonets, boots and even fists. One AIF platoon repulsed 11 consecutive Japanese attacks - each of over 100 men - inflicting well over 200 casualties. **Men like Corporal ‘Teddy’ Bear killed 15 attackers, firing his Bren into the massed Japanese at point blank range. After the war Teddy Bear went back to his first love – the church, finishing a Diploma in Bible Studies. He and his wife worked as youth counsellors in schools.**

Another Aussie Digger Charlie McCallum from the 2/14th Battalion, although wounded three times; stood his ground and fought off hordes of Japanese until his mates had a chance to escape. It's estimated he killed 25 Japanese in his frantic effort to save his 'mates'. Charlie fired his Bren gun until he ran out of ammo, then snatched up a Thompson submachine gun and kept firing, all the time reloading his Bren. He was recommended for the Victoria Cross, which was later downgraded, to the Distinguished Service Medal. His citation read; **“At all times, McCallum was admirably calm and steady. On this occasion his utter disregard for his own safety and his example of devotion to duty and magnificent courage was an inspiration to all the troops in the area. His gallant stand and the number of casualties he inflicted checked the enemy’s advance and allowed the withdrawal to proceed without loss.”**

Lt. Butch Bissett, a jackeroo from the Australian Outback, steadied his men to fight off 14 suicidal enemy charges. There were others too, such as Private Trothe, despite being wounded in the face by a bullet and losing two fingers, he continued firing throughout the night to hold off the Japanese for 8 hours. And Private Vic Smythe,

*2/14th Battalion 1942. Ijibiri on the Kokoda Track*



despite being badly wounded, kept firing his Bren gun for 24 hours. And then there was Corporal Lester ‘Tarzan’ Pett – who stood fully 5 feet tall. He would charge fearlessly at the Japanese machine-gun emplacements hurling grenades through the fire slits. He managed to destroy four of these bunkers single-handedly. Sadly he died from wounds sustained in one such action which won him the Military Cross; his mates thought he deserved the Victoria Cross.

### **Bruce Kingsbury VC**

**But possibly just one Aussie Digger saved Australia from invasion by these merciless Japanese.”** Let me quote again from *‘The Spirit of Kokoda’*: **“There are turning points in a battle – as in life – critical moments in which the course of events is frozen for an instant, waiting for someone bold enough to seize a fleeting chance at immortality. At that moment the Japanese were poised, ready to make a final triumphant charge through to battalion headquarters. It would have been the terminal blow....Bruce Kingsbury saw his chance. Firing from the hip, he charged straight at the stunned attackers. Alan Avery watched in awe: ‘He came forward with the Bren and he just mowed them down. He was an inspiration to everybody else around him....he just went straight into ‘em....as if bullets didn’t mean anything ...We all got a bit of the action, you see. When we saw him, when you see a thing like that you sort of follow the leader, don’t you?....I reckon he almost gave his life away....there was nothing scared about him. He did a marvellous job.’”**

Kingsbury’s gallant charge completely demoralised the enemy. His sweeping fire cut down 30-40 of the enemy and sent the remainder diving for cover. For his inspirational valour, Bruce Kingsbury was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross – the first ever on Australian territory. Today at the battle site at Isurva ‘Kingsbury’s Rock’ stands to



*Bruce Kingsbury*

the right of the Memorial. **“If the Japanese had broken through they would have overrun and destroyed the Australians, and no doubt streamed down to Port Moresby”,** wrote Lex McAuley.

**“In the afternoon of 26th August 1942, C Company of the 2/14th relieved C Company of the 39th militia much to the joy of the worn out men. The Japanese Commander Major General Horii had been continuing probing actions against their defences. Later that evening more of the 2/14th arrived but the Australian force were still outnumbered six to one. By the 27th August the 2/14th was now in defensive positions around Isurava, they waited for the inevitable attack that was to be unleashed. The 28th August saw Horii bombard the Australian positions with his mountain guns followed by waves of attacking Japanese. This resulted in heavy hand-to-hand combat.**

**On the 29th August, Bruce Kingsbury relieved Cpl Lindsay ‘Teddy’ Bear of his Bren gun, (due to Teddy’s wounds suffered as he led his own counter attack earlier), another wave of Japanese infantry attacked C Company’s position.**

**Kingsbury charged forward shouting “follow me” as he fired the Bren from his hip. Breaking through the Japanese line**



**of advance he cut them down and inspired his fellow soldiers to keep going. He stood alongside his best mate Alan Avery who was armed with a Thompson Sub Machine Gun. This action forced the Japanese to retreat back into the jungle. As the rest of his comrades caught up to him he was hit by a bullet from a Japanese sniper.**

*2/10th fighting patrol - Milne Bay 1942*



**Alan Avery carried him back to the Regimental Aid Post but he was already dead. For his selfless act of valour Bruce ‘Steel’ Kingsbury was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The London Gazette reads as follows: ‘In New Guinea, the Battalion to which Private Kingsbury belonged had been holding a position in the Isurava area for two days against continuous and fierce enemy attacks. On 29 August 1942, the enemy attacked in such force that they succeeded in breaking through the Battalion’s right flank, creating serious threats both to the rest of the Battalion and to its Headquarters. To avoid the situation becoming more desperate it was essential to immediately regain lost ground on the right flank.**

**Private Kingsbury, who was one of the few survivors of a Platoon which had been overrun and severely cut about by the enemy, immediately volunteered to join a different platoon which had been ordered to counterattack. He rushed forward firing the Bren gun from his hip through terrific machine-gun fire and succeeded in clearing a path through the enemy. Continuing to sweep enemy positions with his fire and inflicting an extremely high number of casualties on them, Private Kingsbury was then seen to fall to the ground shot dead by the bullet from a sniper hiding in the wood. Private Kingsbury displayed a complete disregard for his own safety. His initiative and superb courage made possible the recapture of a position, which undoubtedly saved Battalion Headquarters, as well as causing heavy casualties amongst the enemy. His coolness, determination and devotion to duty in the face of great odds were an inspiration to his comrades.’** (Kokoda Historical).

Bruce Kingsbury’s body rests at Bomana War cemetery in New Guinea, while his Victoria Cross medal is on display at The War Memorial in Canberra.

### **The Most Highly Decorated Unit In Our Military History**

**At the war’s end Kingsbury’s Battalion the 2/14th was the most highly decorated unit in the British Empire, winning a Victoria Cross, two Military Crosses, four Military Medals and several Mentions in Dispatches. By the time the Kokoda campaign was over the 39th Battalion (militia) who bore the brunt of the fighting at Kokoda and Isurava would be reduced from 550 to little more than**

32 men. But it proved costly for the Japanese – of the 13,000 invasion force fewer than one tenth would ever see their homeland again.

Right throughout the Pacific campaign Aussie Diggers proved their courage again and again. Men of the 2/14th Field Regiment were so keen to get into action against the Japanese that they volunteered to parachute onto New Britain with their 25-pounder artillery pieces – despite the fact not one of them had ever worn a parachute in their lives! US General Kenney wrote: **“At the last minute the Australian gunners....decided to jump with their guns. None of them had ever worn a parachute before but they were so anxious to go that we showed them how to pull the ripcord and let them jump.....General MacArthur swore that it was the most perfect example of discipline and training he had ever seen.”**

The battle-weary Japanese were pursued by troops of the 25th Brigade – comprising the 2/25th, 2/31st and 2/33rd Battalions – and the 16th Brigade – comprising the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions – along with the 3rd Battalion and men from medical and supply units. The Japanese advance in New Guinea had been stopped cold; the threat against Australia was broken. The Japs had advanced so far that they could see the lights of Pt Moresby. In his book *Retreat from Kokoda*, R. Paull writes about the battles of Ioribaiwa and Imita Ridge: “I estimate that we had about 5:1 odds against us, yet the number killed was 4:1 in our favour.”

2/27th Battalion (my Uncle Alf's unit) after heavy fighting at Gona



## Japanese Were Impressed With Aussie Bravery

The Japanese commander was so incensed by the brave, stubborn, resistance of the Australians that he demanded they be wiped out – nothing short of total annihilation would satisfy this outraged Nipponese officer. No other country or army had so successfully withstood the Divine Emperor’s soldiers as these damned Australians. In countless battles through China, Malaysia, the Philippines and even the fortress of Singapore the Japs had never before encountered such an impudent foe. Japanese soldier Shigenori Doi wrote: **“During the battle we advanced about 200 metres and I remember an Australian soldier, wearing just a pair of shorts, came running towards us throwing hand grenades. I remember thinking at the time this was something that would be very hard for a Japanese soldier to do. Even now, when I think about it, I’m affected by the memory of this warrior. I suppose the Australian had a different motivation for fighting, but this soldier, this warrior, was far braver than any in Japan. When I think about it now, it still affects me.”** (*The Spirit of the Digger*’ by Patrick Lindsay).



*Aussies pursuing the retreating Japanese Army in the jungles of New Guinea*

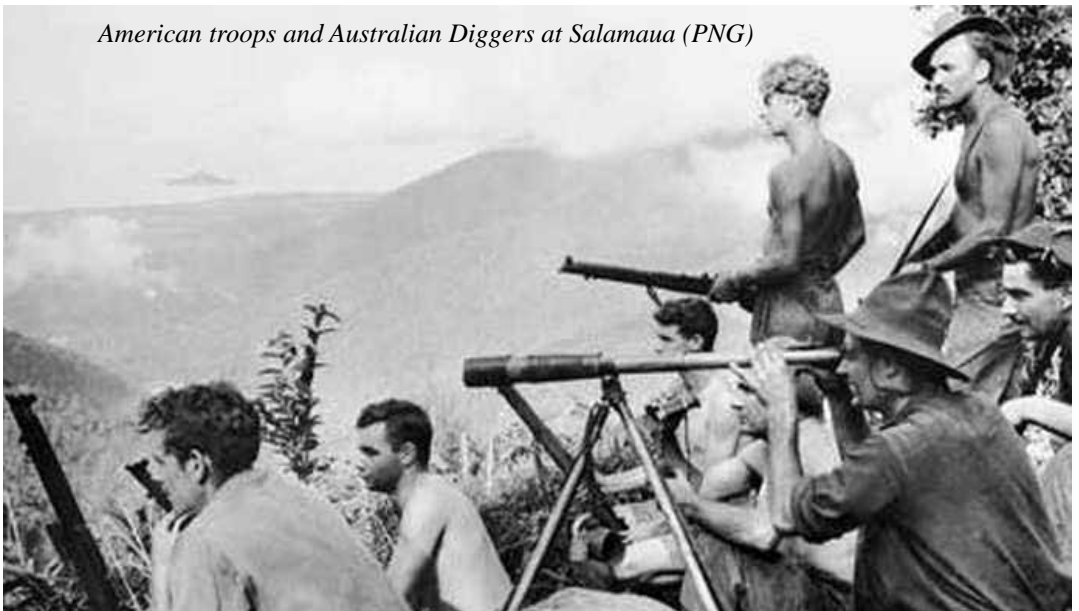
Just so the reader doesn't think I am exaggerating the courage of these Australian Diggers, let me quote Paul Ham, author of the book *'Kokoda'* again. Ham journeyed to Japan to interview some of the survivors of these savage battles, in an article entitled *'Looking For The Enemy'* (Weekend Australian Nov 20-21 2005, page 30), he wrote: **"Then a little queue formed at my table: first three, then six, tiny stooped, skinny old (Japanese) men supported by a son or a grandson, hobbled up and one by one loudly toasted the 'very, very brave Australian warriors'....Another declared: 'Never, not in the entire war, had we encountered fighting men as brave as you Australians.'"**

To this I might add the Japanese Commander's own assessment as to the courage and ability of our Australian troops: Japanese Major General Horii Tomitaro wrote of their fighting spirit: **"In comparison with the American infantry, the fighting spirit of the Australian infantry is strong."**

The diary of Japanese Second Lt Fukuichi who fought on Kokoda records the Japanese Army's intelligence assessment of the Aussies fighting ability. **"The Australian soldier has a greater fighting spirit than the English, American or Filipino."**

In fact the Japanese were far more afraid of the Australians than their American counterparts (and they openly stated this fact).

*American troops and Australian Diggers at Salamaua (PNG)*



## **Japanese Chief-of-Staff. Lt-General Yashihara's Assessment of Aussie Diggers Fighting Ability**

In an interview (after WW11) General Yashihara had this to say about the Australians: **“We made a miscalculation of the fighting spirit of the Australians.** Before meeting them in battle we had the idea that the Australian forces were not very well trained and were inclined to be disorderly. However, we did have some respect for them in wide ranging battles where the action of individual soldiers were important. In practice in the Kokoda battle, these qualities of adaptability and individual initiative enabled the Australians to show tremendous ability as fighting men in the jungle. Especially in small groups in independent action they were superb. We had some knowledge of the Americans and had rated their fighting ability much above that of the Australians. **In fact the Australian performance was remarkable.**

As Chief-of-Staff I was not in the front lines in the Kokoda Battle, but the testimony of my front-line officers was that the fighting spirit of the Australians was superior to that of the Americans. When the Japanese first struck, the tendency of the Americans was to give up ground, which enabled the Japanese to fight in a planned pattern. In the case of the Australians, however severe the attack, they did not move, which disappointed and confused our soldiers.” (end quote).





*General Douglas MacArthur inspecting  
the Australian 9th Division*

### **General Douglas MacArthur**

***‘Soldiers usually win the battle but the generals get the credit.’***  
(Napoleon Bonaparte)

Unfortunately the Allied Commanders - General Douglas MacArthur and Australian General Blamey were hopelessly out of touch with what was taking place on Kokoda; neither had ventured to the front lines of this bloody combat. MacArthur was so ill informed he believed the Australians outnumbered their Japanese foes, and as a result he resorted to a propaganda campaign aimed at the American public. **MacArthur even went so far as to advise the USA that American soldiers were doing the fighting, when in fact no American soldier saw combat until mid-November.**

It was many years later before we would learn the real truth of this bitter, horrific warfare carried out along the now famous Kokoda Track and how it was Australians alone who had stopped the Japanese Army. Over 600 Australians were killed and almost 1700 wounded during the Kokoda campaign. It was perhaps the most significant battle ever fought by Australians in World War II, but the magnificent victory in New Guinea had little to do with either General MacArthur or Blamey but everything to do with the courage and leadership of the Australian troops.

## **Is Courage Merely The Absence Of Fear?**

I'm not sure we understand the true meaning of courage today. Is it merely the absence of fear? Like 99% of people I too have experienced fear in my life, deep gut wrenching fear! So I have a healthy respect for genuine courage. The famous author Mark Twain wrote: "***Courage is not the absence of fear. It's acting in spite of it.***"

One of my biggest battles with fear took place in December of 1974 after Cyclone Tracy had torn the heart out of my hometown Darwin. Tracy destroyed or badly damaged 90% of the houses in the city, (11,000 homes including ours), killed over 60 people, and injured and maimed hundreds of others. Because our home had been destroyed I took Jan and our 4 children to live in our fishing tackle / gun shop in the city. Although the building had sustained some damage it still offered warmth and shelter from the ceaseless rain and storms. The problem was there was no power or lights (actually there was no power for many days) and at night people were breaking into the shops and looting. For the next few days Darwin was almost completely without law and order. (I know what it is to live without law and order. Thank God for the police force, the thin blue line that stands between us and total anarchy).

At night we heard gunshots and rumours abounded that the police were shooting looters. (Actually they were just shooting stray dogs). Anyway it was enough to put the wind up me good and proper, coupled with the advice from the police that I was to arm myself. I was sleeping in my gun shop with enough firepower to start WW11, just me, my wife, Jan's sister Ann and our four little kids. I didn't need a second warning; I grabbed a stainless steel Smith and Wesson .357 Magnum handgun and strapped it on my hip. Instantly I was transformed into Ned Kelly or at least Dirty Harry.

"Come on mate, make my day!" I thought to myself as I strode about my shop. But once the sun had set and the eerie noises of the darkness started again I quickly lost all that bravado - I was scared stiff!

One night a group of hippies began busting into the stores in our street; soon they were decked out in women's clothes and riding brand-new bikes. Before long they fronted up menacingly at the window of my gun shop. With the adrenaline pumping, I grabbed up a 'Big Jim' torch, drew my trusty pistol from its holster and hit the switch on the flashlight. Instantly the powerful beam of light broke

the darkness, some of the hippies jumped back in shock. They hadn't expected anyone to be inside the store. Then they proceeded to hold up the crow bar they were carrying and pointed to the window, indicating their intentions to bust into my shop.

I was the only thing that stood between these drunken louts and my wife and kids. That's where courage kicks in – no, courage is not merely the absence of fear, it's doing what's right, even if you have to do it scared! I freely admit that I was scared spitless – but as husband and father it was my responsibility to defend my family! So I held up the handgun and pointed to them, telegraphing my intentions of what would happen if they tried to enter. One guy, drunk off his face just smiled and waved goodbye!

Phew! I definitely needed a new pair of undies; I was shaking uncontrollably! No, my friend, courage is not the absence of fear – sometimes you just have to suck it up and tough it out. Even if you have to do it scared – that's OK, but just do it!

### **I Have Experienced 'Real' Fear**

It was around this time that God began to reveal the truth of His Word to me and how it could change my life. I began to meditate and confess scriptures such as:

\* *“The righteous are as bold as a lion.”*

\* *“God has not given us a spirit of fear but one of power, love and a sound mind.”*

The Lord began to show me that before He could use some of the great men of the Bible, He first had to get rid of fear, a 'grasshopper image' - men like Gideon, Peter, Paul and Abraham. Take the case of Gideon in Judges 6:1-16. God took this fearful, overcautious non-entity of a man and made him a conqueror, fearless, a victor. How? By planting the seed of His word in the man's heart. By changing the way he saw himself. When God found this fearful man, he was hiding in the wine -press. Gideon asked God, *“Why are we poor, downcast, defeated? Cannot someone deliver us?”*

To which the angel of the Lord answered, *“The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour.”* (Literally, 'you strong and worthy hero of fearless courage').



Gideon simply couldn't believe it - here was this fearful, cringing, over cautious man and God called him 'a mighty man of valour'. Why did God challenge him this way? Because God saw Gideon through the eyes of faith. He didn't see the weak puny, fear filled man. He saw, by faith, a mighty man of valour, able to rise up and deliver Israel.

Oh, if we would too would just heed God's Word and drop our grasshopper images, what changes could be manifested in our lives! What mighty men and women we might become! God had a plan for Gideon – And He has one for your life too!

Have you ever asked God - Why me? Why am I like this? God was lifting Gideon out of his grasshopper complex. Verse 14 continues; ***“Go in this your might.”***

He wanted Gideon to accept what He said he was (and act on it) not what Gideon thought he was. In other words, God was able to change this man completely with a new vision - a new inner image of himself. This previous cringing, pitiful man with the aid of only 300 men defeated 135,000 Midianites and set Israel free. God spoke to Joshua similarly in the first chapter of the book of Joshua, he instructs him repeatedly to 'be strong and very courageous'.

### **So, Is Courage Merely The Absence Of Fear?**

I believe most people have a distorted idea about courage, mistakenly thinking it means the absence of fear. But courage is not merely the absence of fear; in fact I believe there is something seriously wrong with people who claim they have never suffered from fear. These people are either liars or have had a lobotomy! No, courage is not merely the absence of fear, most heroes act despite their fears. **Perhaps courage may be best summed up as ‘courage is not the absence of fear, but acting in spite of our fears.’**

Courage is mastering or overcoming our fears and doing it anyway – even if you have to do it scared!

Courage is a spiritual force, it's mentioned frequently throughout the Bible; in fact God doesn't take kindly to cowards.

Revelation 21: 7-8 says: *“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. **But the cowardly, unbelieving, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire...**”*

Strong language! It's interesting that mentioned before the murderers, sexually immoral etc, the very first one God singles out are the cowards!

### **Heroes Are Ordinary People Who Master Their Fears**

Another misnomer held today is that heroes are special people, someone out of the ordinary. We almost expect such people to leap out of a telephone booth decked out in red undies, a cape with a great red 'S' emblazoned on their chests, **but the truth is heroes are just ordinary people who perform extraordinary deeds.**

**Albert Jacka VC – The Bravest Man In The Australian Army**  
Bert Jacka was a WW1 Digger who could best be summed up as a 'hero even to heroes'. **Albert had grown up in country Victoria where he had been a regular churchgoer and choir member in the local Methodist church.**

Jacka won his Victoria Cross on Gallipoli where he had captured Turkish trenches after bayoneting 2 Turks; shot 5 more, took 3 prisoners, cleared a whole trench and then held it alone. And that was just the start! He was then sent to Western front in France and was soon in the thickest of action. Bert was shocked as 7 of his mates had been captured and were being escorted as prisoners by 50 Germans. There was no way he was going to let his mates be taken so brandishing a rifle, he leapt onto the parapet with a guttural cry: **“This is no good, boys,” Jacka yelling; “Charge. Charge the bastards.”** (*Bravest*).



*Albert Jacka*

Jacka described the action later; “They hit me three times and each time the terrific impact of the bullets fired at such close range knocked me off my feet. But each time I sprang up like a prize-fighter, and kept getting closer. When I got up to them I shot three through the head and put a bayonet through the fourth. I had to do it – they would have killed me the moment I turned my back. Jacka then charged killing at least twelve more Germans. Other Australians were drawn to the struggle in defence of their mates. **Jacka went down for the last time. He had been wounded no fewer than seven times,**