

Do you remember a time when you imagined yourself somewhere else? As someone different? Maybe when your primary school teacher asked what you wanted to be and you imagined yourself on the moon or fighting fires. As a teacher, a doctor or maybe as a soldier fighting for your country?

Two years ago, I never could have imagined that I would have been standing on war stricken ground, addressing thousands of people, at the 2013 Gallipoli ANZAC dawn service. I never could have imagined how it felt to walk the same paths as the men that had fallen before me. I never could have imagined how much it would change me as a person, how much I would feel for those men and their families, how much it would tear me in two.

I remember travelling to Gallipoli and feeling so immensely proud, and sad, for what our Kiwi soldiers did for New Zealand in world war one, but as the days went by in Turkey and I spent more time with the Turkish and the Australians, I realised that there was so much more to it than just one nation.

In 2013, we stood there in ANZAC cove as New Zealanders, Australians, Turks - ethnicities from all over the world, we stood there united, friends. We are all just people living on one planet, sharing our one world. We may have been from far reaches of the earth, but we came together, we stood on that historical ground and remembered. Remembered what our ancestors did, for our country, for us, on the very ground that lay beneath our feet.

I was only 17 years old when I travelled from New Zealand to Turkey. In my 18th year of life, I was still only a kid, innocent, with no idea of what was really out there but that was the year I was let free, considered a "big kid", old enough to make my own decisions. I was terrified and excited of the decisions I would make, the idea of university or if I'd travel overseas, but little did most of my peers around the same age as me in 2013 realise, nor do most of my peers now, is that just 100 years ago, hundreds of men and women around the ages of 18 or 19 or even younger underwent huge responsibility changes too, but not quite with the same prospects as we did or do now. These young men and women weren't deciding if their duvet spread matched their curtains, they were deciding whether or not to stand up and fight for duty, in a country miles away from home, where life and death wasn't a sure thing each day.

These men spoke different languages, came from different jobs, families, towns and cultures, but they were all just men fighting for their country. All just men. My most memorable day in Gallipoli was when I walked the same path up to where we stood that ANZAC morning, just as my ancestors did 100 years ago, the same path but unlike those so long before me, I was not carrying ammunition and supplies, nor the dead weight of my best friend on my back. I was not shielding myself from bullets nor watching hundreds of men fall hopelessly beside me. I was just walking, remembering. Reflecting on what was done for each of us.

As I walked through rows upon rows of graves, I came across Private Martin Andrew Persson, Wellington Regiment, I never knew this man, perhaps he was a farmer in Palmerston North, maybe he had a girl back home, but Martin never came home, he was killed in action 8th August, 1915. Aged 17. 17, the same age as I was just two years ago, his life taken too soon,

before he'd really even lived. It was then that I cried, cried for the thousands of men I never knew, of every nationality, every age. Cried for the mothers and wives left behind, left widowed, or without their sons. For the sons without fathers, the sisters without their brothers. I cried for the tragedy we call world war one.

16 million people died as a result of world war one. 16 million. That's the whole of our country killed 4 times over. The war was brutal and heart-breaking, but it has shaped each of our countries' heritages, it has taught us the total destruction it causes, taught us a significant lesson as the human race, a lesson of which we paid the ultimate price.

Today we stand and remember our soldiers, our heroes. Though they may now be laying in lands so far from our own, our tears may be soothed with the words of Atatürk- *Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours... you, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land. They have become our sons as well.*

Their name liveth forever more.