

2019 Sir John Monash Education Bursary

Sir John Monash as a Role Model

“Reflecting on the Principles Demonstrated by Sir John Monash”

Response:

An individual's understanding of the world around them is fundamentally shaped by the principles which society has accepted. Principles are a set of broad philosophies that encompass personal beliefs, knowledge and the values, guiding individuals to recognise how to act during different aspects of life. Without principles, individuals are left vulnerable to making inconsistent and potentially immoral decisions when faced with a new or difficult circumstance. Sir John Monash (1865-1931), a prominent and hardworking citizen, provided Australia and other international military personnel with a complete set of raw principles that allow them to successfully be guided to live an ethical and moral life. Monash derived his actions and motives from around his belief *of preservation of unnecessary death in combat, hard work, dedication to education and the concern of the communities around him, through community service and volunteering*. Through his determination, ambition, intelligence and diligence, Sir John Monash Australia's maestro, who developed an ingeniously holistic approach to warfare and consequently became the first Military commander to be knighted by a British Monarch, King George V, on the battlefield.

Sir John Monash was an outstanding military commander, Australia's greatest, a product of militia system that produced first rate generals. Monash had the essential qualities, the capacity to bear great strain and to make quick and clear decisions. His sheer intellect, his articulateness, as well with his forceful personality, induced respect and confidence among the military. Effectively, it was through his ability to problem solve that enabled him to rise through military ranks in the way Monash did. His ability to problem solve evolved from the implementation of his principles during various experiences.

There was no doubt that Monash was an intelligent child, a natural Philomath from the beginning. John Monash was born in Melbourne in 1865 to immigrant parents, one of the first Jewish families seeking refuge in Australia from Europe. Monash's father took the family to a small rural town of NSW; Jerilderie, to open a general store. It was here that the young boy began his lifelong appreciation for the Australian landscape and the 'down to earth spirit'. Attending Jerilderie Public School, at 10 years of age, Monash began to be recognised by his intelligence. Under the influence of Schoolmaster Elliot, young Monash's dedication to his education and attentiveness to learning became predominant. Consequently, Elliot presented Monash the Dux of Jerilderie Public School. As a student of Jerilderie

Public school, this was the beginning of my desire for learning and expanding my knowledge of the world. I believe that Jerilderie Public School focuses on students as individuals and aim to develop their own personal skills, providing a broad curriculum, enriched with many extra-curricular and sporting activities. I personally was blessed with the opportunity to attend Jerilderie Public School and also spend my junior netball career at Monash Park. Jerilderie has adopted a 'restorative justice' approach to our everyday life to 'set up' the individual, including myself for life. This approach can be works in parallel with Monash's concern for the community around him and can be considered an aspect of Monash's life that, as a result of his success, is a quality that I chose to strive to.

At the age of 14, through his *academic diligence, hard work* and particular talent in mathematics, Monash was awarded Dux of Scotch College Melbourne. It is evident that through his efforts Monash was able to attend University of Melbourne, an institution of which he was later to become Vice Chancellor, studying Civil Engineering, Law and Arts and became involved in broader cultural activities, such as debating, politics, theatre and journalism. Through Monash's attitude for hard work and consistency, it is evident that Sir John Monash strived to live to his potential academically and socially. Although Monash's childhood seemed pretty straightforward, he unfortunately had to discontinue his study due to the passing of his mother. Monash's decision to support his family and work on the construction of Princes Bridge over the Yarra River in order to support the family financially is a great example of one of his principles that he chooses to live by, *the concern for the community is more important than solely than the individuals*. "...equip yourself for life, not solely for your own benefit but for the benefit of the whole community" Sir John Monash.

Monash University is a tribute of his legacy to Australia. Monash lived by a very simple and graceful Italian motto; *Ancora imparo*, which translates to "I am still learning". This motto effective captures the essence of his approach to life, and respectfully became the motto of Monash University. Monash effectively became the famous Australian who contributed to almost every level of Australian life. A man judged by history as an inspirational leader.

No individual could start a military career at a lower level than Monash did, in July 1884, as a volunteered part-time reservist in a Citizen Military Force. The sheer fact that Monash volunteered as a soldier profoundly reflects his selfless principle regarding *his dedication to the community*. Conversely, however, no individual may finish their military career high then a general, although Monash concluded his career as not only the "Greatest World War General", but also was named the "Greatest Australian". Step by step, Monash became 'noticed' at senior levels, nevertheless it had been a long haul. As a Jew, Monash was unfortunately never completely trusted, a considerable delay in the rank progression. However, through

the implementation of his guiding principle was to *avoid needless loss of life*, whilst also expressing his motto of “feed the troops on victory”, his impregnable sense of justice lead his successful progression amongst the military ranks. War correspondent and journalist CP Smith, stated “There is not a man on board that would not follow him to the ends of the earth with a perfect mind... he was not a fighting commander, Monash’s qualities were of different order”, reflecting Monash’s faith in his ability to problem solve and faith in his own intelligence as a result to his *diligence and dedication to his education*, despite the fact he was not in the position to disregard orders. Monash, although guilty of many mistakes regarding his approaches to different situations, is deemed and advocate of a successful entrepreneur as a result of consistency in learning from his mistakes. He often instructed his senior officers: “I don’t care for your loyal service and obedience when I am right, when I really want it most is when you think I am wrong.” This quote from Monash reveals Monash’s commanding intellect, as well as his basic honesty and decency. Perhaps, no one in Australia’s history, crammed more effective work into a life; but, he said, “Work was the best thing in life.” Monash’s philosophies, ideas and principles are clearly evident today in the embodied character, ethos and values of our modern Army and Nation.

By 1914, 49 years of age, Monash was in command of the AIF's 4th Brigade in Egypt and Gallipoli, the only Australian Brigade commander among the original troops to not be killed or wounded. In 1918, he was appointed corps commander of the Australian Forces, leading the troop to the final stages of the war. Although it was not until the battle of Hamal, that Monash was truly recognised for his true character. Monash’s intelligence and skilful planning resulted in a successful capture of the whole town, highlighting Monash’s incredible *eye for detail*. Monash quoted, “the true role of infantry was not to expend itself upon heroic physical effort, not to wither away under merciless machine-gun fire... but on the contrary, to advance under the maximum possible protection of the maximum possible array of mechanical resources...to advance with as little impediment as possible; to be relieved as far as possible of the obligation to fight their way forward.” Sir John Monash was destined to teach generals how to wage war, how to reduce the number of casualties, and plan a more holistic plan of attack. Known as a meticulous planner, Monash always tried to plan the battles in stages. For example, he was renowned for the idea of bombing German lines with gas and smoke shells together for a few days prior to an attack, so that the Germans would associate the gas with the smoke. However, on the day of an attack, only smoke shells would be fired. This not only provided a smokescreen for the advancing troops, but it also created time for the Australian troops to advance given the Germans were convinced that smoke meant that there would be gas as well, distracting them and causing confusion, impairing their visibility and communication. Reflecting his ethics to *preserve unnecessary death as a result of* the conquering the battlefield rather than creating a massacre, thus relying on his intelligence and education to be able to conclude that plan with the faith in the best possible result for his military

community. Moreover, during the Battle of the Marne, Ferdinand Foch, Supreme Allied Commander, was astonished when he had realised that Monash had stopped at the first bridge, “Why are you still here? Why haven’t you advanced... you have guns, you should have used them”. Sir John Monash simply responded, “I can’t sabre them all, guns are never the initial plan of attack”, highlighting Monash’s *raw and holistic approach to warfare*.

Ultimately, through Sir John Monash’s guiding principles, he was successfully able to guide his personnel through the horrific and unfortunate events of warfare. Monash’s diligence and dedication to education allowed him to effectively have faith in himself when problem solving, striving to save the lives of his soldiers and the unnecessary deaths of his enemy. Few people are remembered longer than two generations, John Monash is one of these few men. Monash has truly made an incredible on-going impact on Australia and its future citizens. His life and career represent the opportunity that Australia provides for migrants and their children to excel and contribute. He is a model of leadership, community service, and achievement for individuals living and working in the country Australia. Monash is, was and will be a man from the past, present and the future. A great citizen and a great soldier.

Grace Leeds