



Frank MacDonald MM Memorial Prize 2017/2018

1917: The worst year of a hideous war (for Australia and Australians) wrote Max Blenkin, Defence Correspondent Australian Associated Press, December 14, 2016. How accurate do you think this statement is?

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Video Presentation

Written Statement

“One death is a tragedy; one million is a statistic.” Joseph Stalin

For years, I have gone with my family to Anzac Day and RSL events and, within my family and school, we think the historical events that underpin these occasions are important to know about. Personally, the Frank MacDonald MM Memorial competition was a valuable opportunity to combine my interest in World War 1 with my desire to make documentaries.

When I started researching and viewing documentaries about 1917, I learnt much about the harsh weather, the inept leadership and the senseless and costly battles. I began by watching a History Channel program called *Anzac Battlefields: The Western Front* and reading Reg A. Watson's book, *They Served with Distinction: Compendium of Tasmanian Military History*. My siblings told me Mr Watson's book was a 'bible' for Frank MacDonald research. However, it was another book written by Mr Watson, *Lindisfarne and World War One* that made the war real to me, especially the losses of 1917. A quotation by Stalin my Dad referred to also had a significant impact on me and the story I wanted to tell. The quote stated the death of a million being a statistic but the death of one is a tragedy. I intended to focus on the story of the tragedy – one that had touched my family, and nearly everyone else's, both then and now.

My research also relied heavily on the information and photographs from the Australian War Memorial website. On this site, I found the photos of 'The Lost Diggers of Vignacourt'. This large French town, as remembered by the 5th Battalion, was used as a rest area for tired ANZAC soldiers. I was profoundly affected by the prints. These soldiers looked like the people I would see every day. I decided to use the images captured by the Thuillier family and put them to music. This forms an appendage to my video. The idea to do this was inspired by tributes I had seen at funeral services. There are many Springsteen fans in my family; his anti-Iraq song, *Devils and Dust*, seemed to appropriately reinforce the message of these World War One photos.

Effectively, the video produced for this competition concludes at the end of the bibliography. However, as part of the production process, I showed my class the video and sought their feedback. The power of the Diggers' photos was undeniable. One of my classmates wrote:

“Those pictures at the end of the video made me sad; it was like my heart was pounding out of my chest because those men, who would have had families, died for their country. I can't imagine my family receiving a letter to say that our father or mother or son or daughter had died in a war. It changed how I feel for those who serve our country...”

My friend's comments are exactly what I want people to know about 1917 and it is for this reason, after the video, I have attached the musical tribute which closes with my dedication.

As Reg Watson stated: *“...it is 1917, that the majority of Australians suffered the greatest losses.”* The sheer number of casualties, the horrendous weather and the poor leadership all contribute to the validity of Max Blenkin's contention that *1917 was the worst year of a hideous war for Australia and Australians.*

558 Words

477 Words without quotes

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FOOTAGE

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Mr Reg A. Watson, conducted 21 July 2017.

MUSIC/AUDIO

Artillery Barrage Sound Effect: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w869BWTJuh8>. Accessed from YouTube in July 2017.

Gallipoli, 1981, Gallipoli Soundtrack – 8. The Final Race: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr4p4_PhDkU. Accessed from YouTube July 2017.

Rain Storm sound effect: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6lGGgWC0hc>. Accessed from YouTube July 2017.

Bruce Springsteen – Devils and Dust – The Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cG8ZQkeZvzc>. Accessed from YouTube May 2017.

Hozier – Take Me to Church (Cover by Simply Three): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FMa6jWqO8E>. Accessed from YouTube July 2017.

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Corporal Matthew Creek, Royal Military College Band – The Last Post:

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The Australian War Memorial Website: www.awm.gov.au. Accessed from May to August 2017.

The Soldiers' Memorial Avenue: www.soldierswalk.org.au. Accessed July 2017.

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