

Weary Dunlop Swinburne Scholarship Essay 2015

A Lesson in Leadership from Sir Ernest Edward "Weary" Dunlop

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There are people who we meet, or hear about, who's unwavering dedication, determination and care seem to be able to cut through to our core, and inspire us to become a better person. Their stories motivate us to achieve greater heights than we ever initially thought possible, and lead us to help more people than we ever could have imagined.

Sir Ernest Edward "Weary" Dunlop is one of those people. Before his time in the war Sir Edward had already committed his life to the benefit of others, working hard to obtain a scholarship to study medicine at Melbourne University. Once enlisted in the war, he held a number of roles as a medical officer, until he became a Japanese prisoner of war in 1942. Nicknamed 'Weary' as a representation of his ability to 'never wear out' (a slogan used by the recognisable brand of Dunlop Tyres), Sir Edward Dunlop never gave up on his men and worked tirelessly for the betterment of others.

Due to respect he had from his fellow men and his extensive leadership skills, 'Weary' was placed in charge of the POW camps. His compassion and courageous leadership made a living nightmare much more bearable for those at his side. After being transferred to the Thai-Burma Railway where prisoners of the Japanese were being used as forced labourer, Sir Edward Dunlop and his men would see some of their darkest days. Men endured severe beatings and were pushed to breaking point. Disease was rampant and the conditions incomprehensible. Still, Sir Ernest Edward Dunlop never faltered, and never let his men down, continuing to defy his captors and working to restore the morale of his men.

Potentially even more striking than his efforts during the war was his commitment to the restoration of peace between Australia and Asia once the war had ended, and his continual commitment to community service. After forgiving his captors Ernest devoted himself to his work once again, starting initially as an advocate for former POWs and progressively developing into more and more pursuits.

Quoted as saying "in suffering we are all equal", Sir Ernest Edward Dunlop dedicated most of his life to the betterment of people and continued to work closely with a range of community service organisations long after the war. These included holding leading roles with large organisations such as the Australian Drug Foundation and Cancer Council Victoria, to smaller often less recognised roles undertaking surgical work in Thailand, Ceylon and India.

Often credited as one of the reasons for the high Australian survival rate during the war, he can be seen as a glowing example of leadership and determination. His constant and unwavering commitment to the improvement of the human condition reminds each of us of our own individual abilities to connect with our compassion and create a better world. The continuation of his legacy through his story can inspire the younger generations of today, like myself, to not give up in our pursuit of creating a better world, and to continually strive for the betterment of the human condition.

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