

MY FIRST TURK

Abalinx - Peter Adamis - 21 April 2015



Two flags under one

I have met a few Turks in my life and I must say that I was pleasantly surprised when I met my first Turk. After growing up in Windsor, St Kilda and Prahran suburbs of Melbourne where there few if any Turks in our region and being raised to think ill of the Turk because of some 400 years of Ottoman occupation in Greece, I was apprehensive of ever meeting a Turk. My first instance was by chance and it was in 1974 while I was a young soldier serving with the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment based at the time in Brisbane Queensland. The Battalion had recalled us back from annual leave because of the disastrous floods that had overwhelmed the local emergency service during the great flood of Brisbane.

I was stuck up on one of the many skyscrapers at the time operating a "retransmission" station via our "77 pack radios", monitoring the river for debris, such as dead livestock, building material and especially for some drums of toxic material of which we were not told exactly what was inside them. I must have been lucky because a few floors down there was a restaurant of some sort and being a bit of a larrikin digger I went down quickly and asked if I could get something to eat. I was starving as the waters had now risen up over the pavements in the city and water was now flooding the underground car parks.

I spoke to some bloke who appeared to be the manager and said that something would be brought up to me. After a short period, a young chap opened the top door leading out to the roof top and brought a most welcomed hot meal. He was probably about two years older than me, a good looking chap and at first I thought that he had a Greek heritage. When I asked of his background, he said that he was Turkish.

I think that on reflection shock and surprised must have appeared on my face and the young fella picked it up and asked if I was all right. I recovered quickly enough to thank him and say that all was well except for the weather. During our discussion I found that I was warming to him and he likewise and that's when I told him that I had a Greek heritage. He did not seem surprised when I told him, and that is when we both exchanged life experiences.

He had also been brought up to think along the same lines and we both laughed at having to meet one another in such unusual circumstances. When my shift had finished after a few days later, I returned back to the barracks and got on with whatever else was required of us in assisting the local civil powers. Even now after some 41years I have fond memories of that moment in meeting my first Turk.

As years went by I met many other cultures and members from diverse communities and took them all on face value. Never again would I have any serious thought against any member until I had personally met with them. It was a great lesson to learn early in life and that is not to hate another because of their skin colour, race, faith or personal history, for all nations are made of the best and the worst of mankind.



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