



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – February 2022

WELCOME

Welcome to 2022; a brand-new year filled with hope. It's been a long haul over the past two years and I am optimistic that that we can start to emerge from the nightmare of the past two years in a positive way. Many things will never return to the way they were pre-COVID, but with some luck and hard work, the more important things will. I'm sure that I speak the truth when I say that living through COVID has changed us all in one way or another.

We have lost so many people over the past two years. Many of our beloved but ageing heroes of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s have died: Kenny Rogers, Dawn Wells, John Prine, Charley Pride, Charlie Daniels, Little Richard, Mac Davis, Jerry Jeff Walker, Trini Lopez, Meatloaf, to name a few. There is no doubt that their legacies will continue to influence us for generations to come. I also acknowledge our JD friends who have passed away recently and who will be sadly missed this year and in the future.

The AIO events are gradually returning and I have some good news to share in regard to Aspen in October 2022, which will also mark the 25th anniversary of the death of John Denver. Some traditions that have been ingrained in the AIO experience will no longer be available, but Laurie Stowers has some exciting news to share. Those details are included in this newsletter.

It is also good to know that many of the regular musicians are returning to Aspen this year; Ron Matthews, Chris Collins, Mark Cormican, Aspen Meadow Band are confirmed and there are quite a few other regulars who may attend. I won't mention their names until they confirm, but you know who they are! These regular performers are an integral part of the annual pilgrimage to Aspen.

But I would like to see the return of the BIG concert. Not the variety concerts that have been staged for years, but a headliner who will attract a crowd. Australian singer/songwriter Rick Price, who resides in Nashville, puts on a wonderful tribute show, as does Paul Aleman from California. I've seen Paul and Renee Armand at the iconic Franklin Theatre in Tennessee, and the night was pure magic. Canadians Rick and Steve Worrall, along with Lee Holdridge, staged a show in Canada in 2019, complete with an orchestra and opera singers. Others include Jimmy Fong from

Australia, Bevan Gardiner from New Zealand, Cathy Gianfala Carriere from Louisiana, Brad Fitch from Colorado, Jim and Anne Curry, who have participated in some of the large concerts in the past. Perhaps they could be persuaded to schedule one of their regular tribute-shows to be performed at the Wheeler Opera House in a future AIO.

In my opinion, a headliner concert at the Wheeler Opera House could be beneficial for the longevity of the Aspen in October week. After all, bums on seats equals an income for the Wheeler Opera House as well as for the artists. I realise that during 2017 for the 20th anniversary, there were steps taken to expand the options available for visitors to Aspen for that special tribute, but the inability for some to work cohesively together resulted in tears. Perhaps all that is needed is for one person or organisation who has experience and contacts in the entertainment industry to coordinate with the Wheeler and with potential tribute artists.

And yes, I am taking a simplistic view because I believe it can be done. From my perspective, and I'm sure many overseas regulars may agree, that to invest the amount of money to travel from Australia, Europe, or the UK, an incentive to make that booking may simply be because of a special concert or performance.

I am sure that the extra 'season' that AIO provides to Aspen's businesses is something they want to retain for as long as possible. Personally, I would like to see AIO remain a permanent fixture in Aspen; one that continues with the next generation.

Enough said, and Janette is stepping off her soapbox so that you can read the rest of the newsletter. I hope that 2022 will mark a new beginning in more ways than one.

Stay safe, stay well.

ASPEN IN OCTOBER 2022

From Laurie Stowers

Good news!!! We have location and dates for Aspen in October 2022!

We've spent the past 4 months researching and contacting every property in Aspen that might provide us with enough economically-priced accommodations for a group of our size — and a gathering space large enough to accommodate our nightly singalongs.

What we discovered is that the Mt. Chalet folks have been giving us one heck of a bargain, especially for recent years — a bargain that literally no other hotel in town would match. We had almost lost hope in locating any place in the city of Aspen but after an EXTENSIVE search, we were delighted to discover Frias Properties, who offered us a deal too good to pass up — especially when compared to all the others that were either too small, too expensive, and/or had no group gathering space available.

The accommodations will be condos rather than hotel rooms — from 1 bedroom to 4 bedrooms per condo. This will be a slightly different experience than what we are accustomed to, but there are also several positive things about the change:

1. **S P A C E.** Each condo has a spacious living room and a full kitchen, plus separate bedrooms and bathrooms.
2. Most people find it more economical to stay in a condo than a hotel room because you can prepare all your own meals instead of having to eat out.
3. Speaking of preparing your own food, this location is only two blocks from the City Market grocery store.
4. Conference Room. There is a large conference room shared by both properties, and we have exclusive use of it anytime night or day for the entire duration of AIO week! The room has plenty of seating, a fireplace, and a full kitchen, as well as audio visual hook-ups, etc. It will accommodate our nightly singalongs with much more space than we are accustomed to having; and it will also be a great space for concerts and presentations. Plus, we have exclusive use of the room for socializing when the room isn't being used for concerts, etc.
5. Easy walking distance to everything downtown.
6. No monitoring of our group; no one telling us it's time to break up the gathering because of noise, etc.

Here's the important information:

Dates: October 5-12, 2022

Lodging: Chateau Roaring Forks (1039 E. Durant Ave.) and Chateau Eau Claire (1034 E. Cooper Ave.)

*****These are right across the street from each other.**

Nightly Singalongs: Chateau Roaring Fork Conference Center 1039 E Duran Ave.

Contact for reservations: Erin Wilson - Frias Properties

+1 (970) 429-2441 erin@friasproperties.com

Mention you're with the 'John Denver Group' to get discount rates. You have to specify the property name. Chateau Roaring Fork or Chateau Eau Clair as they have multiple properties

1 BR/1 bath \$200/night

2 BR/2 bath \$350/night

3 BR/3 bath \$500/night

4 BR/3 bath \$600/night

The only additional charges would be the 6.3% service fee (which includes optional daily housekeeping) and 11.3% tax. 50% down will reserve your desired dates, with the remaining 50% due 30 days prior to your arrival.

***Unlike a hotel, each condo is owned by an individual who allows Frias Properties to manage the rental of it. At first, there will be a limited number of condos available because they are waiting on many of the owners to turn in forms showing availability for 2022 (basically stating the dates they want to use the condo for themselves). As these forms trickle in, more condos will be available. So, if you call for a reservation and everything is filled, be patient and ask to be notified as soon as more become available, which they will. Erin tells me that even if they fill all available units at Chateau Roaring Fork and Chateau Eau Claire, they will begin booking at some of the other properties they have next to these. So, we will all still be very near each other.

This will be different from our usual hotel experience, but if you are willing to share the space with other friends in our group, it will be comparably affordable to past years — plus each person will have his/her own bathroom. Bear in mind also that many of these condos have a couple of twin beds in at least one room, allowing for an extra person to share expenses.

If you have any questions, feel free to send a message to Laurie Stowers (through the AIO page on Facebook), Cara Catrett, or Erin Wilson (Frias Properties).

We can't wait to see you there.

POSTSCRIPT: It looks as though many people want to attend AIO this year and currently all available condos have been booked. However, more will become available so please contact Erin Wilson erin@friasproperties.com and ask to be placed on a wait list. Alternately, you can book at any of the excellent hotels in town, including Limelight, Mountain Chalet, St Moritz, Aspen Mountain Lodge, Tyrolean Lodge, etc. For more information, please keep checking the AIO Facebook page.

HIGHER GROUND AUSTRALIA

Our group, Higher Ground Australia, is still in a holding pattern in regard to making any decisions about future October gatherings. The uncertainty surrounding state borders remaining open, the various rules and regulations regarding vaccinations, QR codes, masks and the bans on singing make organising a weekend get together too difficult at the moment. At some stage later in the year, when things are more stable, we might try to organise a weekend away to catch up with one another in a relaxed atmosphere. For now, this newsletter will continue as regularly as possible and our website and Facebook pages are still available.

Website: www.hgavic.com

Email: hga.vic@gmail.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/higherground.australia>

FROM THE ARCHIVES

(This is a very long article, but worth the read. Since it's a transcript of an interview, it includes the nuances of speech, which I think it delightful.)

JOHN DENVER: HIS ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGHNESS

Rock's nice guy on how he went from small town Texas to the king of Colorado

Chet Flippo Rolling Stone Magazine May 8, 1975

John Denver is an enigma in a myth wrapped in sunbeams. Bringer of light and happiness, seeker of truth, discoverer of the basic musical common denominator, he also manages to sell records; seven gold albums thus far. One's first encounter with him comes in the form of a bubbly voice at the other end of a transcontinental telephone line. Yes, he has decided that he will break his self-imposed ban on doing interviews and will meet me a week hence in New York. He has but one request: Could the interview begin in Central Park, as the trees and the vibrant greenness would be more conducive than an office or some hotel room? Agreed. "Have a nice day," he advises encouragingly as the conversation is terminated.

Nine a.m. on a gray, stone-chilled Tuesday in Manhattan. There will be no sunshine this day unless Denver brought a few kilowatts in from Aspen. He is nonetheless undaunted as we meet in the lobby of the Hotel Pierre. He is not dressed for Gotham's chill: a denim suit, high-topped moccasins, a flower-print shirt and a silver eagle around his neck. Uncannily, we look enough alike to be brothers. Also, we find, as we cut through the early-morning traffic on Fifth Avenue on the way to the park, we are the same age and in

fact were at rival high schools in Fort Worth, Texas, and even used to haunt the same dank, pee smelly honky-tonk there where Jimmy Reed fronted the house band. That, as Denver remarks, is "far out." What a heritage: Two average guys from a bland All-American city where high school football is king and where, after the big game, one goes to drink illegal beer at Jimmy Reed's knee.

"Far out," says John as we angle down a path toward the zoo. His name back then in high school was John Deutschendorf. Classmates of his I've talked to described him as "Mister Nice Guy, Mister Average." He's still Mister Nice Guy, it seems, and enthusiasm is infectious, so much so that I almost do not notice the mugger who is stalking a nervous businessman 100 yards away. Central Park does not really get "safe" until later in the day but I do not mention this to John, who is exclaiming about the beauty of our surroundings. "What building is that, the new one behind the plaza? To see all of that coming out of the trees is far out."

He changed his stage name to Denver after once catching a glimpse of the Mile-High City and zeroing in on the trees and the mountains and things. I want to find a windbreak somewhere, so we hunker down between some giant gray boulders above Wollman Rink, where a few early-morning skaters trace desultory figure eights in the ice.

After an hour or so of talking, the cold and the fine mist gets to be too much even for John — "Colorado cold isn't like this, it's dry. Right now in Aspen we could be wearing T-shirts" — so we strike out in search of breakfast. We decide on the Pierre's Yellowbird Room and are promptly thrown out for not wearing ties in what is obviously a very proper coffee shop. I was irritated; Denver became almost testy as he mentioned the affair to the desk clerk but still concluded with "Have a nice day." So we adjourn to his seventh-floor suite where his wife Annie is bundling up their baby, Zach, who they're in the process of adopting, for a shopping trip out on the Avenues.

Over breakfast (room service does not require a tie) we finally have a chance to study each other. Denver is indisputably the most composed, most self-confident public figure I have ever encountered. In fact, we trifle away half an hour discoursing on that very subject. In the parlance of today's liberationists, we find that he is "very much in touch with himself," as a result of years of struggling to achieve the musical success that he knew was rightfully his, his self-discovery in Colorado and his association with est founder Werner Erhard. It's also partially due to his rebellion against his father, a career military officer; and to his association with Jerry Weintraub, a brash, confident promoter who has handled Sinatra, Elvis, Zeppelin,

and who has kept Denver as a client for six years, nourishing him through the lean years because they sort of believe in each other.

I'm still not sure what to make of Denver, what to think of someone who takes a Pulsar watch and has it built into an antique-style hand tooled silver pocket watch. His music is...pleasant, it touches millions of lives. He seems to be the quintessential television personality of the Seventies; true family entertainment. His specials draw consistently high ratings and he's now planning his movie entree: He will out-Jimmy Stewart Jimmy Stewart in a remake of 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.' He's a Nice Guy.

Let's start on some common ground, which would be high school in Fort Worth.

High school was...it seems awfully far away now. My dad was in the Air Force and we traveled around a lot. I was born in Roswell, New Mexico, and then Dad was in Tucson for a while and then it was back to Oklahoma where both Mom and Dad are from, and then we went to Japan for three or four years and then back to Oklahoma and then Tucson and from there to Montgomery, Alabama, for one year. I started ninth grade a week after everybody else had started and I didn't know anybody. I was in a chorus class and they asked me to bring my guitar to school one day which I did and all of a sudden people knew me...in the halls people would start saying hello. Music is what opened the door for me.

Were you basically very shy?

Yeah, I think I was. I don't know that I'm shy anymore and I'm a lot more secure in myself, but when I was a kid — most 13-year-old kids are shy, whatever act they come on with to make you think they're not. So then, I moved on to Fort Worth and started high school in exactly the same situation, not really knowing anybody. And through church — more than church itself, I wanted to sing in the choir, but senior high fellowship is where I met a few kids that were going to the same school and then in school my guitar and sports are what made friends for me. I was working after school washing dishes at the McCrory Five and Dime on Camp Bowie Boulevard. My activities were centered around school and football and church and senior high fellowship and I got together with a couple bands and started playing parties, proms, stuff like that. It was the music that really worked for me. It was the thing that I always did that was easy and made me feel good. I liked singing for people.

Since this was the late Fifties, what kind of material were you doing? Who were you listening to? The Kingston Trio?

Yes, absolutely. "Tom Dooley" was like in 1959 and all of a sudden folk music was the real big thing. Up to

that time — I had an electric guitar that my folks got me and I took lessons in Tucson with a guitar that my grandmother gave me — "This Old Guitar," that's a true story. Then I got another electric and a little amp and I would take that to school and play. I would do mostly the ballad songs that were popular and I did a lot of Everly Brothers songs which were never right because I couldn't sing both parts. Then as a graduation present my folks got me a Fender Jazzmaster and a Fender Pro Amp and I was getting more into folk music. "El Paso" was a big record and I did that. And then all the folk groups, especially the Kingston Trio.

You were playing folk music with a Fender?

Well, I was playing the Jazzmaster but I was playing it softly and in the bands that I played with, mostly rock & roll bands, I was the rhythm guitar. I never was much of a lead guitar. I could play some of the stuff...was it the Fendermen or...

Or the Ventures?

The Ventures. I could do their stuff. And I could play — I used to love to go listen to Jimmy Reed.

I used to see him at Jack's Place.

At Jack's Place! All right! I remember going out to Jack's Place. I used to sing all Jimmy Reed songs.

That's hard to imagine...

It is hard to imagine me doing that.

I was personally glad to leave Fort Worth after high school.

I was too — in fact — I think it really took a long time for me to be able to assess what was going on with me with regard to where I lived and what I did. I ran away from home when I was a senior in high school and it came out of all the conflicts that happen between parents and their children who can't communicate. Things weren't right and I felt responsible for it and felt that I should just leave. I didn't want to but that's what I did. I went out to California and I was gonna try to get a job on a boat or something. I really wasn't strong enough with my music then, but that didn't cross my mind at the time. So I got out there and pretty soon...about the time I arrived I ran out of money and didn't know anybody and got really scared and called the folks to find the number of a friend we had there. I went to stay with them and Dad came out and got me and we drove home together and talked a little bit but I don't know that anything was really solved then. So we got back together. Then I graduated from high school. Things had gotten to be good in school but still there was nothing solid there. Then I went on to Texas Tech. College was awfully exciting. All of a sudden I was on my own, didn't have to go to bed at any particular time, could study when I wanted to...and my grades showed it — and I really

enjoyed playing football...it was a very carefree time. I was majoring in architecture which is something that I still really enjoy. But a lot of stuff that I was doing just didn't have any meaning at all. The second year was very much like that except I pledged a fraternity but didn't make my grades. I was playing with a band again — playing a lot more than I ever had before and I was also singing by myself. I was learning from Joan Baez and Tom Paxton and the Chad Mitchell Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary and the New Christy Minstrels. I was just eating that up, I loved all of that music. That was the kind of music I had been singing and now it had a label. People called it folk music.

Had hootenannies come to Lubbock by then?

Yeah. I played one hoot and did real well, did three songs and got a big encore. For my encore I sang "One More Mountain," which was a song by Perry Como. So I was doing all of that music and I was going to school and enjoying the architecture but nothing was happening in Texas with the exception of the music and nothing else really worked for me. The one thing I really decided to do as good as I could and learn and grow with was the music that I did. And it got to the point again that things got hard with my parents. So, halfway through my junior year at the semester break I left. Everybody — and I mean everybody...said that I was making the biggest mistake in my life. Also I found out they'd been betting on how long I was gonna last. My friends in the architecture department had been betting on whether I was gonna last through the semester. And then I'd gone home to my folks and all they did was give me shit about my grades and there was really no interest in finding out what was going on for me in my life and so finally I left. Then I had to write back and tell my folks what I was doing and they did what was probably one of the best things they ever did for me and I think the greatest thing any parents could do for their children: They gave me the space to go. They sent me \$200 and they said, "We don't approve of this, we would prefer that you stay in college and we think you're gonna go slouch around and when you get tired of playing around like that, then let us know and we'll help you go on from there with your education." I think they had the feeling that music was something you really like to listen to and it was nice that I had a talent — played guitar and sang in the choir and stuff like that — but entertainment wasn't something you did for a living.

That was a popular parental view. Music pros somehow weren't clean, it wasn't something you did for a living unless you lived in Hollywood.

That's exactly it. And also, entertainers were people who would get a little crazy. So I went out to California and got a job working for a draftsman and then started singing everywhere I could. I went to all the hootenannies and they were going on all over

everywhere in L.A. The second year I was there I went to Leadbetter's, which was owned by Randy Sparks. I sang and he came back after the show and said he'd really liked my voice and would like to talk to me about working there. It totally flipped me out and it came from two things — Randy liked me and saw potential and also Leadbetter's was put together as a place for people to get their acts together so they could fit into the New Christy Minstrels. The Back Porch Majority was kind of a farm club for the Christy Minstrels and when the Majority got good enough to go out on the road there was then a farm club for them. Somehow, within that framework, Randy had me working as a single. Someone somewhere has a tape of the first week I worked there and I think you would be amazed at how — in a sense — how bad I was but — see, I went from being just really terrible to being only pretty bad in about five days.

That first weekend I started getting encores and I was extended to 26 weeks there and started getting jobs around the country. I signed a contract, which I couldn't legally do because I was only 20 but I wasn't gonna let not being 21 get in the way so I lied and signed but then...Randy was getting tired of me, and on a trip I auditioned at a club in Phoenix called the Lumbermill and they hired me. I went back to L.A. and got a call that Chad Mitchell was leaving the Trio and had given them six months to find somebody to replace him and wow! This was far out — here was a chance to audition for somebody I had listened to in college. They were interested in the audition tape I sent and they flew me to New York. I guess they had gotten 250 or 300 other tapes and I had had a cold and was trying to sing like Chad. So I got to New York and at the first audition I tried to sing like Chad and just did terrible and they sent me over to Joe Frazier's house on the West Side and I learned two songs and about an hour and a half later we went back to Milt Okun's office with Joe singing with me and it was a whole different thing. They sent me back to Phoenix and said, don't call us, we'll call you. So I sat around waiting for the phone call — I mean I didn't leave the motel at all except to go to the Lumber-mill to work at night. A couple of days later the call came and they had picked me. So we rehearsed for six days and then opened at the Cellar Door in Washington D.C. So that started the thing with the Mitchell Trio.

How well did you know Chad?

I met him the night I came up to join the Trio. I saw him on the street once in New York and then I saw him maybe three or four times when he was performing in different places. We always said hello but we never talked or anything. So I didn't know anything about him, I got my sense of him from the other guys in the group and other people who had known him.

He dropped out of the Trio because, I think, he got to the space that happens with everybody in groups. It was the Chad Mitchell Trio and the things that happened, the feelings that got in the way of their having fun were that it pretty soon got to be Chad Mitchell and his trio, but when the group was put together it was the three of them and they called it the Chad Mitchell Trio because that sounded better than the Joe Frazier Trio or the Mike Kobluk Trio or Chad, Joe and Mike or whatever. And then they changed it to the Mitchell Trio because the other two guys didn't like it being Chad Mitchell. And then I think Chad might have been the one that shone in the group and then he got the feeling that the Trio was limiting. And so he wanted to leave the group and he had as a matter of fact a play that he was going into on Broadway. That folded very quickly and then he started singing around. I think he made two or three albums.

Did you meet Jerry Weintraub before you left the Trio?

No, I met Jerry when the Trio broke up...I didn't leave the Trio. When I started working with the Trio — there was an interesting bunch of problems here. All of a sudden I had gone from just another folk singer on the West Coast to being part of a nationally known group that was making records and doing concerts and it was great. Great. I was thrilled by the whole thing. I came into it as an employee of Joe and Mike and I think that I added something to the group. First of all, I played guitar, which none of them had done before. They didn't want me to do that all the time, but for four or five songs I would play my 12-string.

How long had you been playing 12-string?

When I went out to work for Randy I had my electric and this guitar that my grandmother had given me which by then had suffered through a summer working in a lumber camp and two summers working on wheat harvests. I got hit over the head with it once in a lumber camp and it just kind of cracked and caved in and rattled around a lot and...

Why would someone want to hit you over the head with a guitar?

I worked up in this lumber camp in Washington state the end of my sophomore year in college. They called me "Tex," which I kind of let them do — and enhanced by talking like a Texan — and I sang and they liked my music. July 4th that year fell on a Wednesday so all the guys were in the camp. A lot of them would go into town and get drunk all weekend and come back to work. But this was a holiday so all these guys went to the bar and had a party. And I went to bed. Well, later on they came to get me to play my guitar, and I didn't want to do that at all. They took my guitar so I had to go get it back. So I went down there and drank beer

and was playing songs with these guys and I was doing one of the old Hank Williams songs and this one guy didn't like it at all. I finished the song, set my guitar down and got up to go to the bathroom and he picked it up and bashed me with it. All of those guys had been in jail at least once and a lot of them were winos and hard men but they were also very loyal men and I was friends with some of them and I never saw that guy again.

But...so I played 12-string. The Trio was really great. The thing that I enjoyed most was the satirical material. We poked fun at everything and it was from the Trio and most specifically from Joe Frazier that I started becoming a little bit more socially and politically aware in what was going on in the country and what was happening in regard to civil rights and government and the way it was being handled. And just a lot of things started filtering in that I hadn't had antennae out for before that and the Trio was fairly politically involved. We campaigned for Eugene McCarthy in '68. We were doing some things before that. We would be at a march. But that was very interesting for me. I really learned a lot with the Trio. They were really professional and intended to be professional. Now, also within that framework, Joe Frazier was late a lot. Generally it was Joe, or sometimes Mike, but quite often one of the guys would be late and I would go on and do kind of an opening show by myself. And then when we were in places like the Cellar Door I would do hootenannies; I'd go on and do stuff that the Trio didn't want to do. And a lot of people said they would like to have a tape of some of those songs that I never got to do with the Trio. So one year, '67 I think, I made a Christmas album and had 250 copies pressed. It had 13 songs on it and I gave it to all my close friends and my family and "Leaving, on a Jet Plane" was on it. Now, before that, "For Bobbi" was on the second album I did with the Trio.

Was that the first song you wrote?

Not the first one I wrote but the first one that was ever recorded or anything happened with it. Peter, Paul and Mary really liked "Leaving, on a Jet Plane" and they recorded it on the album 1700. That was a great acknowledgment for me. But through all of these things, Joe Frazier was getting, I think, tired of the Trio and wanted to get into different kinds of music. He was a little bit more into rock. Mike and I resisted that, but folk was kind of on a downswing...the Beatles had come over and Dylan was on electric and we hadn't been at the top end of the folk stick anyway. When Chad left, a lot of people thought: "The Mitchell Trio, is that the Chad Mitchell Trio?" All that kind of thing. So Joe, through dissatisfaction, was not showing up for rehearsals, showing late for concerts, and finally missing a concert



in Boston. So basically what happened is we fired him from the group.

Instant Replay I

The other original member of the Chad Mitchell Trio, Mike Kobluk, was to leave shortly. He and Denver had disagreements, culminating in a tense stage relationship, resulting in what Denver described as the only time in his life he went onstage angry, sang angrily and went off angry. Denver told Kobluk that the show wasn't working and that, in effect, one of them would have to leave. Kobluk left. Denver found himself the leader of the Mitchell Trio, which included no original members of the group, which in turn engendered a lawsuit from Chad Mitchell, stating that the name Mitchell could be used only so long as two of the three original members were still around. Denver, meanwhile, had personally assumed what he says was \$40,000 in Trio debts. He told Chad that the Mitchell name was essential for immediate dates in order to pay off the debts. Chad dropped the suit. Folk music history.

The Trio continued with Denver, David Boise and Mike Johnson. After the Mitchell Trio debts were paid, Denver changed the name to Denver, Boise and Johnson, which John still insists was the best of the Trios. That lasted until Johnson decided to pull out. Denver decided to dissolve the group.

Denver started thinking about being a single singer. He went to Aspen, Colorado, since he had heard about it and had determined that the best place for an unknown name to start would be at a ski resort where there would be no pressure and where he could collect himself. He did well in Aspen, moved on back to the Cellar Door in Washington, and hit the college coffeehouse circuit. During the course of that, Denver met Jerry Weintraub who impressed Denver because he did not want to sign any contracts and wanted to groom him for television. That was in 1969. Weintraub was right; he kept him on TV and kept his RCA recording contract alive, although Denver's records weren't chart busters, as they say. Denver admitted that this was the only period in his professional life that his self-confidence wavered. He persevered because his audiences liked, nay, loved him. They still do. Back to live action.

So you never considered quitting, as long as you could see that crowd reaction, even if the crowd was only a dozen?

Exactly. I could see it in those faces and I knew how I felt. And I knew that I never went out in front of 24 people and did any less of a show than I did in front of 250 people. Now that's very important for me to communicate that. Because I think that's one of the things that's missing in a lot of people's lives. That's finding out what works for you and. doing that.

But luck has a lot to do with it...

It's luck and perseverance and it's karma and a whole lot of things but again the truth is always there. Now we always doubt it or try to talk our way around it or we're probably afraid to say it or to look at it. But it's always there and if you really open up the space for it to be there and look at it, just notice what's going on for you then you can find out very easily what works and you can direct yourself along those lines. But don't waste the effort and energy and time that we have doing something that is anything less than total fulfillment.

What about some guy who's trapped working in a garage and living in the Bronx and economically there's no way for him to get out?

Well I recognize that and I think that's a very real thing and I don't think that a guy economically trapped living in the Bronx is any more trapped than I was in a military family in Texas.

You have to want to awfully bad.

Sure. A lot of people want to be trapped in a garage in the Bronx or whatever. That's a lot of people's game. But it was worth it for me, see? That time onstage was always just about the best part of my life. So we kept going and then we got together with Jerry Weintraub and he had me recording. Then I was at the Cellar Door with some friends, Bill and Taffy Danoff, who called themselves Fat City. They wrote a song for me called "I Guess He'd Rather Be in Colorado," a beautiful song I wish I'd written. After opening night at the Cellar Door we were gonna go back to their house and jam and we were in a car accident and my thumb was broken. I went to the hospital to have a splint put on and by then I was wired, you know, after a car wreck. So we went over to their house and in the early hours of the morning they showed me this chorus and part of the verse to a song they were writing called "Country Roads" and I flipped over that song. They'd had it for a month and hadn't been able to do anything with what they had. That morning we finished writing that song and I said we've got to record this on the next album, which was Poems, Prayers and Promises. Now, here's a point I was trying to make about Jerry. He heard it and said, ah ha! Finally, here's a record worth working for. He got onto it and by the end of March it had gotten up to about 50 on the charts — the first record we ever had on the charts — and RCA wanted to pull it back and release something else. Jerry and I both screamed. Also, the initial copies that were sent out were distorted and I raised a fit about that and got some help from RCA in getting it taken care of. But, see, I knew we had a good record and I was making an effort at being successful, Top 40 successful. Jerry and I kept at it and it went on to be a Number One record. It really changed the whole situation. I had a record on the charts and all of

a sudden it's not John Denver, the writer of "Leaving, on a Jet Plane," but it's John Denver who sings the song that you hear on the radio. So a whole thing changed. All of this time, I was growing, learning more about myself, noticing what music was coming out of me and where it came from and how it worked and what it had to do with and so I was able to cut away a lot of the nonsense and the bullshit that starts getting in. Like one of the things that I got through very quickly was, well, now that you've had a hit, how are you going to follow that? What have you written since "Jet Plane," what have you written since "Country Roads"? I finally got to a stage where I realized that I had never tried to write a hit record. And I haven't yet. I am the most unprolific songwriter that I know. I've gone periods of six months without writing a song.

You have to wait till the spirit hits you?

That's exactly it. And that's a thing that I feel very strongly about. I don't feel that I write the song. I think the songs are out there and I think — Bob Dylan said this and it was the first time that I thought about it and then Paul Stookey said it better for me. He said that you don't so often feel like the creator of a song, you feel like the instrument of that which wants to be written. See, so I don't think that I create the songs, although I'm willing to take full responsibility for the songs because I put myself in a particular space where these songs are coming to me. I don't think anybody else is writing songs like I am.

What is the force behind these words, what force makes you a vessel to convey these words in a certain way?

Who knows? I think — I feel total responsibility for them because I'm who I am and live the way I do and Bob Dylan's who he is and lives the way he does and is into the things he's into and Neil Diamond and Elton John and Joni and whoever. I just happen to be this way and live the way that I live and these particular songs are coming through me. And, see, it's very interesting to me because, like that Evening with John Denver album, that has some of my favorite songs on it and I happen to be the guy who gets to sing them. See, that's a constant source of joy for me and the celebration is that I get to sing these songs. These songs that come out of nowhere and it's so exciting when you start working on a song and you work on it and you can get stopped.

Like "Rocky Mountain High" took about nine months to write. I had the chorus to it that I had gotten from a camping trip at Williams Lake, about 26 miles from Aspen. I was telling these guys about this meteor shower. I said, you guys are gonna see some shooting stars tonight and you're not gonna believe it. So it's gettin' dark and I noticed, there was no moon that night, and we were up at about 11,000 feet and there're so many stars and the sky gets to be so deep

and so clear that you have a little pool of shadows from the starlight. And then these guys were saying, all right, shooting stars...And then pretty soon there were balls of fire going across. It goes all the way across the sky, you can see the smoke, you can see it and you can hear it. It's great, it's so far out, and I was saying, Rocky Mountain high, I've seen a ray of fire in the sky and the shadow of the starlight, look at that. And then it took me awhile to write that song, to put the story around that song, which is totally autobiographical. Then, "Annie's Song" I wrote in about ten minutes on a ski lift. See, but the songs, they come when they come and I can't force them and it's not my objective to do that. When they come, they come.

Yet, you can almost trace your career in the big songs, the important ones that made way for something else. Whenever there needed to be a big one, one came along.

They come along, yeah. But when I sit down and start talking about it, it's real interesting to me that the music is working and I don't think I've gotten in the way of it. I think that what I'm doing is in a way enhancing the music. It makes the space that the music has more real. I don't think the music would work the way it does if I were different than I am. You know what I mean? If I were...

Maybe it's a matter of ego versus self-confidence. If you're stamping a song with your ego an audience will know that immediately.

I think so. I know exactly what you're talking about. See, I think Elton John gets in the way of his music in the sense that we're talking about right now and all the other ways you can get in the way of the music. Also, he enhances the music because what he's doing goes along with his music....

He could never do your songs, or vice versa.

Yeah, and that's really all we're talking about.... But in my circumstances, regardless of everything else going on or how it's been done, or how it's been treated or talked about or whatever, we find that the music is still working, it still works. It works to the extent now that we're one of the biggest record sellers in the world.

Don't you think that maybe it's because you started in the middle and still are part of the middle and know what the middle wants? Your upbringing, your background taught you maybe unconsciously what most people like to hear. And you kind of reflect that rather than imposing on them something from either Coast.

Yes, but then how is that different from any of the Beatles or from Dylan or from Elton John or the differences there are in all of the music that we do?



Except that I think you appeal to a wider segment of people in, say, the heartland of America...

I think I do and I think television has helped that, it's made a lot of people who don't listen to records familiar with me so they're buying my records but I'm concerned that you think or that someone who reads this, they're gonna think whatever they think anyway. But what I want to be clear about is that I'm not writing songs to please people. I'm not writing what they want to hear.

And if a lot of people happen to like it, that's nice, but it's not essential?

Then that's the most far-out kind of chocolate icing that you can have. I get to go out and do these songs that are my favorite songs and talk about things that are totally real to me. "Matthew" is a true story — the names are changed to protect the innocent but it's a true story. "Rocky Mountain High" is my story, you know. Now I know that as many people that have listened to that song have gotten that many different things out of it. It's totally okay for me for people to get whatever they get — I don't want to get in the way of the music. I go out there and sing these songs and don't dance around. I try to sing 'em as good as I can and sing 'em how I feel them. And now, not only do I get to do that, but we get to go all over the country.

We're doing a tour this year. About 35 to 40 concerts in about 41 days. It's set up as 35 concerts and I know that four of them have already been doubled because the first one sold out. But that's far out, man. There are half a million people in this country who want to hear me sing some songs and I get to do it...See now, I like to do television and I do all the other things I do on television because they're fun and it's entertainment stuff, but the reason that I do television is that they get to see me sing the songs and look me right in the face and get the song from me which they can't necessarily do in a stadium when they're half a mile back. So they can see it there and they can get — I think you can fool a lot of people a lot of times and I don't think that the television camera fools people. I think it's one of the most honest mediums I've ever seen, not withstanding and not counting what people are doing with it. But I think the capability and the potential for that medium right there is so far out that it's amazing.

Did you find at first any difficulty between relating to a TV and a live audience? About how to convey your music through your personality?

Well, no. With TV I think the thing that you have to overcome is that on the other side of that eye there's millions of people. You start making it more than it is. You start thinking about millions of people as opposed to just doing whatever you do, and once you get through that first insecurity or maybe sometimes it's

frustration because you can't see how they're reacting out there which kind of puts you uptight sometimes and you work a certain way.

Not many musicians have been able to do that — singers or musicians or...

Glen Campbell for one, or Johnny Cash or a couple of other people. When I started watching television...

There are a few who can instinctively handle it and can see what the medium is and others hang back or are nervous.

I think that's exactly it. Like I've never enjoyed Glen Campbell on television and I happen to think he's a great singer and one of the best guitar players around. When he sings I don't think he gets in the way of the music. But on television he just never worked for me and I didn't enjoy watching him on TV. It's some weird thing, but I think that I come through on television.

But it's just a natural thing.

Yeah, and see what we did that I think was real smart, and this goes back to Jerry, how he saw that...

Instant Replay II

Weintraub, in carefully nurturing Denver, kept working on that TV potential that he sensed was there. Merv Griffin became a regular outlet for the budding star of the 21-inch silver screen. Then, in a gamble, Weintraub and Denver put the latter into a series on BBC II in England. It meant losing money in America through loss of concert dates and it meant barely breaking even on the BBC shows but it was significant as Denver's out-of-town try-out and training for TV. It did pay off, since Denver's TV specials here now draw consistently high ratings. It is a never-ending source of amazement to Denver that he can do what he wants to...onstage, on record or on TV, get paid for it and have people like it too. Too much. Now we return you to the show in progress....

What is life like for you in Aspen? Do you keep a routine...get up and run or anything?

Totally undisciplined. I think — I try to discipline myself really extensively around the work that I do. When I leave home, when I'm out making a record, I want to put the energy there and I don't want it floating around in eight million different ways. When I'm at home in Aspen some days I get up at dawn, especially now with Zach. I like getting up when he gets up and feeding him and playing with him in the morning before everybody else gets up. And sometimes I just sleep in. When I'm home I really need time to myself. I need time to play and this is something that I recognized in my own life. A lot of people get stuck into thinking that you're a grownup now and you can't play...you can't waste time. There's no such thing as wasting time in my dictionary. I like to play and I like to be out in the mountains. I like to ride

my motorcycle, and really gettin' off on learning how to fly, I love to listen to music and I don't like to go home and sit down and start dealing with business.

I could never understand how people have a studio in their home. Your work's around you all the time.

I feel the same way and everybody asks me now when are you gonna build a studio. People have asked me to get involved in building a studio in Aspen or do I want to record at Jim Guercio's place in Caribou and all this kind of stuff...and no, I don't. I don't at all. I want to go out to L.A. where there's virtually very little going on outside; no distractions. I have no desire to record in Aspen. When I'm in Aspen I want to go play in the mountains. I still do benefits once in a while. If I do play in Aspen it's to do something for something that's going on there.

Have you gotten involved at all in Colorado politics?

To a small extent. I supported Dick Lamm for governor which I feel very good about. I think he's a real good man. And we're in a space where I think we might become good friends some day. I don't know Gary Hart and though I was asked to support him I didn't nor did I support Nancy Dick who was a local congressman nor did I support Pat Schroeder. And I'm really interested in politics. Like right now there's a gentleman running for mayor in Denver and he wants me to support his campaign in Denver and I don't live in Denver and I don't think that I should be getting involved. And I only want to do it when it's somebody that I feel so strongly about that I'm willing to go out there and take responsibility for — in a sense — influencing people. I think that the primary support that I give somebody like that is that I raise money for them. I'm willing to do that but getting less willing as it goes on because I think the cost of running campaigns is ludicrous, really really ludicrous, and I think that we need some changes in how we handle that aspect of government of our life here in this country.

Would you ever run for public office?

That's an interesting question 'cause I've thought about that a lot and over the past year I've had a lot of people ask me about that and I don't know. I'm really intrigued by politics. I've thought about it and I lean two ways — I would love to do that because I think I work with people well. I think that I'm capable of making decisions and I also feel that I'm able to get people around me to give me the knowledge that I don't necessarily have myself. I've got a really good family of people who are helping me support what I do in music and it's working. And I think that I could expand that and so that aspect of it is not something that I would be afraid of but I don't know that politics right now is something that's working. I personally think that my music is working better than politics is, in regard to serving the people.

We have to alter the values in society if we're gonna alter the course that we've set for ourselves. And I'm real interested in observing that and I would like to be a part of changing those values and that's essentially what I think a lot of my music is directed to. See, I don't really feel that I'm directing the music. I do these songs and they all seem to come out of certain things within me and they have to do with certain aspects of life. But the one thing I can say about them is that they all are observances of the truth of my life. Take "Sunshine on My Shoulders." I can walk out on a day like this and feel good — the sun glancing off the water and glaring in your eye can make tears come — and there are a lot of pictures that might go along with that. But that's something that's right there, and I know that it happens to everybody.

I was going through some clippings. Some quoted you as saying you had a perfect life.

Oh yeah.

I don't know of anyone else who would make that statement.

I think that the statement is true for everybody. It depends on how you look at it. But I'm really aware of the perfection in my life from the point of view of what I'm doing and what I'm not doing and what's working and what's not working. I said yesterday, the truth is always there — always coming out. People go through a whole lot of stuff and I get caught in it too, trying to kind of hold back what's really happening inside. When you let it be there and really experience the truth for yourself then you move. And — see, I'm interested, for instance, in success. I've seen success ruin some people and destroy their life and I've been very nervous. For a time in my career when Jerry was talking about bigger and better things, and I don't know that it was better, but it was bigger. There was a time that I literally did not want to play a 15,000-seat hall. I thought that I could do what I wanted to do best with about 2000 people. I wanted to kind of set a limit. And then I kind of got into a space of wanting to be a big success and then I got through that and it didn't make any difference anymore. What made a difference was that I wanted to sing for people and I wanted to live in Colorado and I wanted to do these things with my life. And when it got to a place of just doing it, all the other stuff just started happening. But now I look back and I can see that from my childhood when I first started singing I have been kind of on a path that brought me to here and then I think that I'm a very, very successful person in the business that I've chosen to operate in. Life is a lot more demanding right now, in a sense. There's a lot more that I'm responsible for or maybe I'm aware more of the responsibility that I have but I'm doing...I am what I've always wanted to be.

Perfection is then acceptance of that...



Surrender — see that's —

“Sweet Surrender”?

You bet your life it is. How perfect an existence for fish to float in the water and swim and let food float by and they get it. How far out it is to be a bird and fly around the trees. I am what I've always wanted to be and that is the truth. And I think — in fact, it's not that I think, but I observe that if people were to really take a good look at themselves, they are exactly the way that they have always wanted to be.

I can see that — otherwise you would not have made the decisions you made that led you to what you are now. But is it fatalism?

I don't think it's fatalistic at all nor is it a confining kind of thing nor is it predestined. You see, it's like the truth. I have a sense that people — like let's say we meet each other, okay. Now especially in this regard, doing an interview. And I'm really worried about what preconceptions you have of me and I'm worried about all the considerations and preconceptions I might have of you and I don't know you yet and I don't know if I want to know you and I don't know if you want to know me. My experience is that if I can tell you the truth, just lay it out there, then I have totally opened up a space for you to be who you are and that it really opens up all the room in the world for us to do whatever we want to do in regard to each other. If I don't like you, I'll tell you. And that's great. It doesn't mean that it has to mean anything to you — okay — I've met you and I know something about you and I choose not to operate in the same space together so screw you and I'm going over here — or you can say the same thing to me. But if you tell the truth, or when you tell the truth, or in telling the truth, the truth still makes you free — who said that? Is that in the Bible or something? You ought to take a look in there 'cause it is the way it is. Truth makes you free. The truth opens up the whole universe and puts it kind of at your command.

So many people running around today trying to define truth.

Let's talk about what is truth — see, I know the truth. The truth is the way it is. I have the sense that people are interested in me from the songs that they've heard that I do — they would like to know where those songs come from. Or why it is that those songs mean something to them. I get a lot of fan mail from people who want autographs or want to know if I have a dog, things like that. But I also get letters from people who write and want to tell me something that happened to them or has happened to them through their experience of my music. And they're letters that really thrill me. I got a letter from a guy a little while ago, signed “A Friend.” The fellow was from Oregon and he has a wife and two children and, the thing is,

his wife had a nervous breakdown or something and was in the hospital for a long period of time and was really stuck in something and couldn't cry about it or talk about it and didn't seem to know what it was but she was not functioning and they had her in the hospital. And then they got to a point where they could let her go home on weekends to be with her husband and children but had to be in a hospital and was still not functioning as a human being. One night they were at some friends' house for dinner and they put on a bunch of my albums, started playing them through the course of this evening and pretty soon the lady started crying and she hadn't done that in years. Pretty soon she started talking and now she is home with her family. She's functioning, living. And the guy just wanted to thank me for that. And I don't think he wrote to thank me, he wrote to let me know. Just to share what had happened. That's such a far-out thing.

Does that ever frighten you to know that you have that power over the lives of people who you'll never see?

It doesn't frighten me at all. And I think it does humble me. See, I don't think that I have anything to do with that except in creating a space for myself to be in — which won't get in the way of that. That's totally my intention as regards the music I do. I don't want to get in the way of it. I would like to support it and enhance it. One of the ways that I try to define it is saying the truth is the way it is and then I'll try to put that in a song. “Sunshine” does so many things for me. “Rocky Mountain High”: Moving to the mountains and discovering myself is like being born again. Born again — a totally religious thing that had nothing to do with the church. We were talking about est and I think I told' you that I can't tell you what est is and I say that in a way that I can't tell you what that experience was. I can only tell you what my experiences are since then, I can tell you what my experiences are out of est and they are totally supportive of me being, being — who I am. I think it's really far out to realize that it's okay to be who you are. Est is Erhard Seminar Training and that's what it's called because you can't call an organization in California est...small letters...the Latin term for “it is” but you can call something Erhard Seminar Training and the guy who came up with est or put it together is Werner Erhard. He's a few years older than I am and comes from a little bit different background and was operating in a little bit different area — which was mostly motivation and stuff and he has a very disciplined mind. He got into a lot of disciplines and, it seems to me, took what worked out of this one, what worked out of that one and all the stuff that didn't work he threw away and then put it all together and came up with something that works very, very efficiently.

See, the first time Werner came to Aspen, before he did the first training there, I walked out; I thought it was total bullshit, a rip-off. Pushed all my buttons, man, and I walked out. Later they had a training in Aspen and some people I'd seen there, there was something different, and I don't know that it was good or bad, wrong or right or any of those things, but something happened and I was really in this space of looking, really looking. In fact, a lot of people who have taken the training thought that I wrote the Rocky Mountain High album after the training and the truth is that I had finished the album before I took the training. But the thing is, I saw that something had happened and so then they were gonna have another training and I was gonna be there at that time and I was very interested and so I took the training and I really think that I took the training in a perfect space because I wasn't expecting anything from it and I wasn't there to put it down or to make it wrong to prove that it wasn't gonna work for me. I just wanted to go find out what happened. And est really clarified a lot of notions.

Did it alter your perceptions?

I think it enhanced my awareness — through some tools that I found in the est training, tools that were presented that allowed me to really take a look at things that I can use every day. For instance, I find that people get stuck — like we were talking yesterday and talked about music and today about finding out what works. You got something that's working for you, man, go with that. You got something that's not working and there are a million signs you get that it's not working. Then either alter it to make it work or get out of it. Change it or leave it.

Instant Replay III

Once the New York interviews were over I flew to Minnesota, to tie up loose ends. Annie Denver is from Minneapolis, so they were visiting her folks and signing the adoption papers for Zach. John met me at the St. Paul Hilton, just after he'd had lunch with Governor Anderson, and he was so ebullient he suddenly was taller than me; his feet literally were not touching the ground. I ordered up a six-pack of Budweiser and we popped a couple and got down to talking about his philosophy of life and so on. He's starting a record label, Windsong, and the first release will be a group called Liberty, which is his opening act on his current, massive tour.

We talked for hours, literally, about this here game of life, which John alternately takes seriously in the classic liberal sense and which he also can savor in an absurdist thing. I came to like him, especially when he would spring to the window and point to a bleak concrete park 17 stories beneath us and preach...yes, preach...about what a far-out thing it would be if that concrete could be replaced with grass and flowers and

so on. The folk era lives on through him. He signed autographs for the bellhops. His Cadillac limousine waited without. We had a nice day. We now return to our bulletin in progress...

I've a brand-new song that I think might be the best song I've ever written, and it's just growing on me. I love singing it. And it says,

On the road of experience

I'm trying to find my own way

Sometimes I wish that I could fly away

When I think that I'm moving

Suddenly things stand still

And I'm afraid 'cause I think they always will

And I'm looking for a space to find out who I am

And I'm looking to know and understand

And it's a sweet sweet dream

And sometimes I'm almost there

And sometimes I fly like an eagle

Sometimes I'm deep in despair.

(©1975, Cherry Lane Music Co.)

See, I sometimes, I'm so high — today I'm so high, I'm flying up there some place, flying right in there. I really feel alive today. Sometimes, I feel really terrible. I mean I know what — I know the feeling of despair and I also know that you can get through that. If you let it be the way it is, you can get through it.

In almost every article you've been depicted as Pollyanna or Mr. Sunshine.

Mickey Mouse rock or pop...whatever it is...I sometimes get upset by reviews. I think it's one of my weaknesses, one of the things I haven't quite gotten through yet, and I got so stuck in getting concerned about what people said or how they misinterpreted me or how they put themselves in front of the interview or got in the way of the interview, that I quit doing interviews for a long, long time. I don't mind if they call me the Mickey Mouse of rock, I don't mind if they call me Pollyanna or any of that stuff. And I'm interested to find out if I mind or not whether somebody gets in the way of the interview. I think that is the thing that irritates me, is people not putting down what is said. Or if they do put down what is said, they qualify it from their point of view. People who would review a concert and out of 18,000 people one guy would write a review, and I know that 17,999 people were at a different concert than that guy was at...but, see, that's the concert that he was at. I resent it or used to resent it and maybe I still do. This is one of the things that I need to get through, that people, quite often critics and reviewers, editorialize as opposed to review. I think it would be very easy — not very easy, I think it would be quite a fine art to share with people who were not there what happened. And

I think it would be really far out to tell people from an educated point of view what's good and bad about an album. That there are very muddy mixes, sloppy playing, the guitar is out of tune on that track and it doesn't seem very professional the way it was put together and the guy sings like a schmuck...or there's some beautiful singing of some songs that just don't do anything to me. You know, to me — not beautiful singing of some songs that don't mean anything, which is what they seem to say most often. If they just said, now this is how I felt as opposed to this is the way it was, because I feel that I've gotten some of the worst reviews of concerts and albums that I've read. And — so that's something that has bothered me a lot in the past — some of the things that I would get stuck in, to the point of being afraid to do an interview, was probably where I was. I don't think that people can experience me through this interview. You can experience me, Chet, I think, hopefully you are, I think you are and you might be able to define that in a way through the things that are at your command, where you can give people a sense of who I am.

I think it will show up because it will be in your own words.

That's great. But...and it helps me...if people hear things on the album or see things on television and television so far is the most promising medium that I've experienced 'cause I don't think you can lie to that camera, I don't think you can fool it.

When you did that Tonight thing, do you think that is a possibility in the future to do that kind of role of being a pop-show host?

No — I really enjoyed doing it — and there's a really efficient operation there, and that Tonight Show, boy those people got it together and I don't have any desire at all to do that more than once in a while. Television is real interesting to me, and we're getting a lot of pressure to do a weekly show, which I don't want to do right now.

Weekly shows have killed a lot of people.

I think they have too. That's not the consideration that I have — it's just that it takes so damned much time and it's hard, I think it's hard to keep up the quality weekly. The only time I ever saw it happen was in some television a long time ago before it got so cluttered with stuff. I thought the Smothers Brothers the second season they were on the air was the finest television show I'd ever seen. It was continuously entertaining and awakening and informative and funny and I thought they were great. But doing specials, first of all, it gives me a lot more time to set it up and do it the way I think it should be; plus I have the time to do other things. And like right now, while I still have all these ideas going on and all these things I want to do, and I have the opportunity of maybe really

carrying them off. I have this tour, which I'm really excited about. And then I have this movie that we're gonna make in Alaska and I have the world tour in October. We're gonna have a Christmas special next year, maybe from Aspen, hopefully from some place in the mountains — and then an album to do this summer — and then there's some records I'd like to produce plus I need to have some time at home — I need it for me — I need it for me in regard to me and Annie; I need it for me in regard to me and my little boy. I need it for me in regard to me and the universe. So I need to have that time there. And so doing all of these things now, while there's so much energy going on, and I feel so much energy in me to do all of this and to be able to set it up that way, I don't want to get caught up or stopped doing a television show every week. Specials, like Jacques Cousteau now — I loved it. We wanted to do that on the first show — and wanted to do it again on the second show but weren't able to set it up until we did this one. But I loved it. Now that was an aspect of variety television that had not been on before. Cousteau wanted to do it because I reached with that special a heck of a lot more people than he's reached with his documentary. Now that's funny to me, because I'm a lot more interested in his documentary than I am in variety shows but that's the way it is so I can introduce people to Captain Cousteau in a different way and that supports both of our purposes, which is far out. That's what a good relationship is. So that was really exciting and I would like to do more of that and then one of these days, like I don't think I'm gonna want to do — see, I have a feeling that this might be the last concert tour that I'll do and I don't know why I feel that way.

One of the things I want to write and am working on is an American symphony. I'm involved in something I'm kind of excited about right now that I think would be of interest to you. I'm involved with the Bicentennial Commission in Colorado and I want to get involved with the Bicentennial Commission on a national level and the reason that I want to is that my sense of it so far is that it's a whole bunch of bureaucratic bullshit that's going on: Parades, banners, firecrackers and politicians blowing their horns about how good and how great we are, and what I would like to do and what I am doing in Colorado and hope to expand on a national level, is to get through to young people — elementary-school, junior-high and high-school people...and to open up the space for them to take a look at who we are: who came from where to this little place here on this river and built the town and how did it start and how did it get to be this and where does it look like this is going and how would I like it to be. I'd like to do it through public schools and the thing about it is it's not gonna cost any money, and we're spending millions and millions of dollars on stuff for this bicentennial, some of which I think is far



out and some of which I think is a total waste. But what I want to do is get young people involved, like planting flowers and cleaning up the streets.

I want to do an American symphony with Lee Holdridge and incorporate all the elements of music that I'm aware of that have come down from our history starting with folk music and folk dances; the blues and the sounds of people working on plantations to the jazz coming out of New Orleans and what happened when it moved north and went to Chicago, to cowboy music; to country & western; to rock & roll; to the Beatles when they came over; to today. And do it in a way that incorporates the whole area of music and dance — and with a symphony orchestra to then go around the country and perform it.

Who do you like to listen to when all you want to do is listen to music?

My current favorite album is Linda Ronstadt, Heart Like a Wheel. I think that's one of the best albums I've heard in a long time. Really picks me up. I like Stevie Wonder...I was more excited about meeting him than I was about meeting Redford last night. I think he's just about the best around right now, for what I'm listening for both in the words and the music. What's interesting to me is that I think Stevie and I are saying some of the same things. We say it differently and we certainly come from different places, but I think that we're saying some of the same things.

In that both of you are concerned primarily with conveying your feelings.

Well, for sure, even more specifically in some of those feelings that we're conveying. They say that heaven is ten billion light years away; why can't they say that hate is ten billion light years away? Well, see, I love the question in that song and I know that Stevie knows the answer to it and it's not a question and it's rhetorical anyway — heaven or hate is right here. It's what you make it and I know that and that's one of the things I'm trying to say. I used to listen to Harry Nilsson — Harry, I thought, was one of the best singers I've ever heard, but the last couple of albums haven't done much for me and I'm anxious to hear the new one. I really don't enjoy rock that much. I don't listen at all to things like Led Zeppelin and stuff like that and I do listen sometimes to the Eagles or Paul McCartney, but mostly I listen to acoustic music. I'm anxious to listen to Dylan's new album. I haven't heard it yet.

Did you ever meet Dylan?

No. I'd like to. There's a few people out there that I'd like to meet, quite a few people. Some of the far-out people. I am really turned on by Jacques Cousteau — he's a faaarrrrrrr-out old dude, boy, just really got off on him. I'm really freaked out, impressed and respectful of Werner Erhard for one — I really enjoy every time that I get together with Werner. The time

that I spend with him I always learn something, I always am able to share something new with him and I feel good being with him. Dick Gregory is a friend that I get to see once in a blue moon. But whenever I get together with him I can sit and listen. I really enjoy and have enjoyed meeting Lily Tomlin — spending time with her. I don't know that I got to know her but I sure got off working with her. I think she's great. I really enjoyed working with Dick Van Dyke and Doris Day. Doris is a real good friend now. And Dick, I saw when I was in L.A. I think he's great. I really got off working with Danny Kaye.

I heard that you and Alice Cooper had been in correspondence.

No — uh, Alice...

It was in one of the trades.

No...I made some remark some time, evidently, in a review that came out like I was bad-mouthing Alice and he wasn't worth anything and he's not gonna last and I'm gonna last — you see — I don't think that's what I said. I think that what I said was that what he's doing and the form of his entertainment is built around a certain kind of appeal or state of mind that I think is a fad right now and that that is not going to last, that it's going to go the way of psychedelic rock and the way of — what do they call the songs in the Sixties? Um, protest songs. Go the way of protest songs and all "of that kind of stuff and I think that that will pass. In regard to my relation to that, I don't think that I'm doing anything different than I've been doing for the last 11 years and I'm gonna go on doing it this way and I think that there will be an audience for this music as long as I'm around to sing it and I'm gonna sing it as long as there's an audience that wants to hear it. Something like that. So then there was an article — and I think it was in Rolling Stone as a matter of fact, where Alice said that he was going to make damn sure that he stayed around long enough to piss on my flowers. So I sent him some flowers.

Back when so-called psychedelic rock was the rage, did you ever feel kind of neglected? You were still trying to pursue what you wanted to pursue and there was not much interest.

Well, yeah, I thought we were really, really good, and it was during the time that we were doing that that people started spending all the money in the world getting new far-out acts and Warner Bros., who had just gotten Jimi Hendrix and people like that, man, were not interested in Denver, Boise and Johnson in ties and coats and folk music. And that was frustrating 'cause I thought then, as I do now, that there was value in the music that we were doing and that I got off on the music I was doing. I kept doing my music. See, I think you're losing the game if you go play somebody else's rules.

But there's still a holdover from the psychedelic days. Certain singers would not be heard on FM stations, which I think has happened to you.

I think so. Thanks a lot. And I also think that we're kind of getting through that, but the latest example of that to me, strangely enough, is that I hear songs now on MOR stations that five years ago would not have ever, been heard on MOR stations. Five years ago you would never hear Elton on MOR stations. Five years ago you would never hear Olivia Newton-John on Top 40 stations. Nor would you hear Charley Pride on Top 40 or Charlie Rich, but now all of these things are happening and still, like you say, people start to classify this and that. I heard today — and I don't know that this is true — but some station in Chicago is playing my music with cows mooing behind it. The sense that I got out of it is that it's a Top 40 station programmed probably from outside so they have to play Top 40 songs, but this particular disc jockey gets his rocks off by saying, "I don't like this blah blah — MOOOOO! — stuff like that behind 'Annie's Song.'"

Have you ever thought or considered what, if anything, is the significance or lasting results of the folkie era: liberalism and reform through music, political cleansing, love and peace. Did it do any good?

What happened through folk music is that people really became socially and politically aware on a large scale, especially young people. I became socially and politically aware through Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul & Mary and Tom Paxton and Judy Collins and the Mitchell Trio and that's what I think happened with folk music. Now the love and peace thing was part of the flower music and hippies and I don't see that very much. Well, in a kind of a way some things came out of that, but I think most of that when it was there was kind of contrived and it didn't last long and it didn't work that way because it was contrived. But I think that what came out of it...see now, like I really celebrate going around to places and seeing people who are doing what they want to do and who are pretty easy people. We learned out of that — we learned that you can make a living doing what you want to do, not having to go to college and be in business. You can do what you want to do if you have a craft or things that you're interested in and you can make a living and then we kind of came through that and we found that we can do it very well working with people.

Today, it's interesting to me also, the value that documents have, 'cause I was gonna say, today Annie and I started a family and that's really not true at all 'cause in fact it started nine months ago when Zach came into our home and in fact it started long before that. But today, all the red tape and all the stuff that goes on — that we as people have added on to it

being what it is — was finalized. We got all the agreement that's necessary that Zach is our little boy now. And I wept at that. And yet, from before Zach was born, he was our little boy. And that's another story. Tell you about that sometime. Has to do with the perfection of life. I feel that children choose their parents. I feel that children are responsible for the space they create for themselves to grow up in. And see, that's two hours' talking right there....

I want to write a book. Want to try to put some things down in a way that's not disciplined or defined by song, music. Sometimes that's a confining space. Especially confining when radio stations won't play a song that's longer than three minutes, which is one of my sore points.

It's funny that the Dylan single off the album is five minutes. They put it out unedited.

There were five stations in the country that did not play "Back Home Again" and they didn't because, as I understand, the head station, whatever it was, said they would not play a song that was more than three-and-a-half-minutes long. "Back Home Again" was four-and-a-half-minutes long. In spite of that, "Back Home Again" was a Number One song and it sold a million copies and blah blah. So that's great, and if this particular station plays the Dylan song, I'll go ask them about it. But, see that's one of the things that you have to deal with. See, a song is a song is a song, and the length of it, the beginning or the end, don't really make much difference except to the song. But it irritates me, yeah, I guess it does irritate me and hopefully I get through it, but it does irritate me that I have to take a song like "Sweet Surrender," which was written to be repeated, and do it just once. The song doesn't sound right for me on the radio when I hear it. I take a song like "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" and have to cut it down to be a single and I'm willing to do that, make that compromise, because then people will hear it on the radio in their car, more likely, and then they will want to get the album possibly, and listen to that whole thing and that will be the way I want it to be. And those songs will be the way they are as songs.

I've got control over that. So you play the game; so it irritates you. Big deal. "It irritates me that you don't give me a song that's two-and-a-half-minutes long, schmuck. You know, who the hell do you think you are?" So you play the game and people get irritated and it goes up and down and back and forth and within all of that there's a space for the truth.

Written by Chet Flippo

May 8 1975 — Rolling Stone Magazine

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/john-denver-his-rocky-mountain-highness-168837/>

RADIO PROGRAMMES – WILLIE HOEVERS

Willie Hoever's of the Rocky Mountain Foundation for the Performing Arts has worked tirelessly to promote John's music through the foundation and through his regular radio programmes.

In 2013, Willie launched his fortnightly online show, 'The Music of John Denver' for American Veterans radio, which is available globally on www.avradio.org

The next show is on Saturday **February 27** at 2pm Mountain Time.

4 - 6 pm Eastern time

3 - 5 pm Central time

2 - 4 pm Mountain time

1 - 3 pm Pacific time

12 - 2 pm Alaskan time

2100 - 2300 UK time

2200 - 0000 European time

Next Morning – Sunday May 9

4 - 6 am Japan time

6 - 8 am Sydney, Australia time

8 - 10 am New Zealand time

Additionally, Willie hosts the show in the UK on Ridge Radio. The next show will be held on **February 20** at 6pm UK time www.ridgeradio.co.uk

Here is a time zone conversion chart:

6:00pm - 8:00pm UK Time

7:00pm - 9:00pm European Time

4:00am - 6:00am Sydney Australia Time

5:00am - 7:00am Auckland New Zealand Time

2:00am - 4:00am Tokyo Time

1:00pm - 3:00pm Eastern Time

12 Noon - 2:00pm Central Time

11am - 1:00pm Mountain Time

10:00am - 12pm Pacific Time

9:00am - 11:00am Alaskan Time

Watch this space for other syndicated shows. For more information, please contact Willie

willie@rockymountainfpa.org

<https://rockymountainfpa.org/home>

ASPEN IN OCTOBER – 2022 EVENTS

(From the Aspen in October Facebook Page)

Please check the Facebook page for events and tickets.

www.Facebook.com/aspeninOctober/events

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 5, 2022

Meet & Greet John Denver Sanctuary

THURSDAY OCTOBER 6, 2022

Ron Matthews Concert 1039 E Durant Ave. Aspen

FRIDAY OCTOBER 7, 2022

25 Years of Celebrating John Denver 1039 E Durant Ave. Aspen

MONDAY OCTOBER 10, 2022

Goodbye Again John Denver Sanctuary

The list will be updated with confirmed times and ticketing information as information comes to hand.

TRIBUTE ARTISTS

Check out your favourite tribute artists.

CATHY GIANFALA CARRIERE

<http://www.cathygianfalacarriere.com/>

MARK CORMICAN

<http://markcormican.com/schedule/>

JIM CURRY

<https://www.jimcurrymusic.com/future-concerts/>

BACK HOME AGAIN

A tribute to John Denver.

Tom Becker is a former member of the Legendary Folk Group, The New Christy Minstrels, and has gone on to appear with Grammy Winners and Music Legends including Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Gregg Allman and Jerry Jeff Walker.

<http://www.johndenvertribute.net/schedule.htm>

CHRIS COLLINS AND BOULDER CANYON

Chris Collins & Boulder Canyon has scheduled shows in August and September. Please check the website for details.

<https://bouldercanyonband.com/concert-schedule>

CHRIS WESTFALL

Friday July 30 free concert at Bethany Beach Events & Entertainment. Details

www.townofbethanybeach.com

<http://www.chriswestfall.com/inConcert.php>

JOHN ADAMS

[HTTPS://WWW.JOHNADAMS.BAND.COM/CALENDAR](https://www.johnadamsband.com/calendar)

CHRIS BANNISTER

<http://chrisbannisterthemusicofjohndenver.com>

BRAD FITCH

<http://www.cowboybrad.com>

WILL KRUGER

<http://www.willkruger.com>

RICK SCHULER

<http://www.sunshinerick.com>

TED VIGIL

<http://www.tedvigil.com>

JOHN DENVER PROJECT BAND

<http://johndenverprojectband.it>

RON MATTHEWS

<http://www.ronmathews.net>

For more information about tribute artists around the globe, check out our website; www.hgavic.com

FALLING LEAVES (THE REFUGEES)

For me, Falling Leaves (The Refugees) is particularly meaningful with all that is happening across the world at the moment. These are the lyrics I've chosen for this newsletter. Words to think about...

Some material included in this newsletter has been derived from the public domain, such as the internet and printed media. Articles and reviews are the opinion of the individual writer and as long as the content is of a reasonable nature and it is appropriate, it will be included. Organisations mentioned or featured in this newsletter are included to educate and inform people of their role and purpose. HGA does not profit from including the names of any organisation in this newsletter.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.



Falling Leaves (The Refugees)

(John Denver)

*Thank you for this precious day
These gifts you give to me
My heart so full of love for you
Sings praise for all I see
Oh sing for every mother's child
For every childhood tear
Oh sing for all the stars above
The peace beyond all fear*

*This is for the refugees
The ones without a home
A boat out on the ocean
A city street alone
Are they not some dear mother's child?
Are they not you and I?
Are we the ones to bear this shame?
And they this sacrifice?*

*Or are they just like falling leaves
Who give themselves away?
From dust to dust from seed to shear
And to another day
If I could have one wish on Earth
Of all I can conceive
It would be to see another spring
And bless the falling leaves*

*Thank you for this precious day
These gifts you give to me
My heart so full of love for you
Sings praise for all I see
Oh sing for every mother's child
For every childhood tear
Oh sing for all the stars above
The peace beyond all fear*