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**HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER - December 2014**



**Welcome**

Welcome to our December newsletter and the last one for 2014.

I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Happy Chanukah, Happy Hannukah, and Happy Holidays

This is the last newsletter for 2014, and I will be taking a break from newsletters for a couple of months over the holiday season, whilst Tom and I set off for a new adventure in Hawaii and Central America as we travel through the Panama Canal. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and assistance over the course of the year. We will be back bigger and better next year, and I look forward to catching up with many of you through this newsletter, Facebook, or Face to Face in Aspen.

**Our Newest Member**

We met one of our newest members during the John Denver tribute weekend in October. Welcome to Jimmy Fong.



Jimmy performed with John in Malaysia for the Malaysian King and has these wonderful photos as a reminder of this event. Of course, we pumped Jimmy for all the good stories about meeting John, and were delighted to be able to share some time with this talented and lovely man. Welcome Jimmy and thanks for sharing your memories with us, and I sincerely hope that you are going to join us again in the future.

**After the JD Tribute Weekend**

Our good friend, Peggy McDonald contacted me recently with some exciting news and advised that there will be some new and positive changes in regard to her work with raptors. I have included the email as I have received it. I have also extended (on behalf of HGA) our very best wishes as Peggy embarks on a new direction in her work.

*Hi all,  
As a friend and someone who cares, I am sending you the following.  
I repeat, it is business as usual though!!  
Kind regards to all.*

*Peggy  
\*\*\*\*\**

*Hi Jiselle,  
Would you kindly forward this in its entirety for me please?  
My authority will be posted today.*

*Thanks  
Peggy  
\*\*\*\*\**

*Dear WIRES Wingecarribee members,  
I would like to ask you to please take the time to read all the following.  
As the founder of WW this is a decision that has been taken with a great deal of heartache, and the genuine belief that this was/is the best way to progress the knowledge I have gained in overseas study, and to see better care practices put in place for our raptors across the state.  
Please understand that I, everything I have, am and will continue to be, is always available to help WW members and the birds of the Southern Highlands as has been for the last 27 years. ( Don't worry Jocelyn - possums too!)*

*It is a change in name, not a change in me, what I do, what I believe in and care about. I am really proud of all I have achieved in WIRES, especially in my tenure on, and as Chair of the Avian Management Team, over 15 years.*

*As far as I am concerned it is business as usual, but with greater opportunity to see raptor care in Australia progress to the world class standards that my overseas studies have shown me exist. I wish you all the very best, but again I repeat that this is not a goodbye just a necessary following of the WIRES constitution to enable me to move forward and spread my wings as Peggy again.*

*Kindest Regards to all*

*Peggy McDonald*

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*Hi Leanne,*

*I have just been officially advised that my application to become a member of WRSC has been formalised, therefore reluctantly in accordance with WIRES regulations I must resign. I am including this to my branch Chair as well as Caroline for raptor transfer confirmation. Caroline I wish the raptor team all the very best, and I am always available to help at any time as per normal.*

*All the very best and I do hope this will not be the end of my long association with WIRES, rather just a way to progress something I am very passionate about.*

*Kind regards*

*Peggy*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Dear Leanne,*

*It is with a great deal of sadness that I forward this email, but also with the confidence that by doing so I will be able to move forward clearly and positively with my unwavering passion to advance and exchange our knowledge of raptors to improve their successful rehabilitation and release.*

*The upcoming OEH Raptor guidelines review is a step I have believed necessary for a very long time, and the opportunity to participate in it something I feel very strongly about.*

*Having raised my hand initially, and then thinking that not hearing back by the time I needed to put arrangements in place, I have taken the only step I believed open to me and made preparations to join another carer organisation. I left it until the last moment to do this, and I feel that it would be unfair and inconsiderate of me to suddenly reverse my decision now as I have determined my application is underway.*

*Knowing that WIRES policy requires a member belong to one organisation only, and that the decision I made will mean that I will have to resign from an organisation that has been a part of my life for so long, this step has not been taken lightly.*

I do understand that you will require my resignation which will be forthcoming, but I genuinely hope you understand that this is not a matter of "leaving WIRES", more that my desire to bring raptor care in NSW up to world class standards mean I have no choice.

It is my genuine hope that our relationship will continue, and please know that I will always be available in a caring, educational and advisory capacity for WIRES should you wish.

Events of the last week have reinforced my belief that we must do what we can to make a positive difference while we can, and with that foremost I have now decided that this is the best way for me to facilitate that conviction.

Please feel free to call me, and I will hope to speak to you later today to ensure you have received this.

I genuinely hope that this will not be the end of my relationship with WIRES, just a change of name and a step forward to help all raptors.

Kindest regards

Peggy

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi Peggy

Thanks - I know that this decision may have been very difficult for you, but I know that this is a positive step forward for raptor care in Australia. I believe that you are a pioneer in this area, and I am sure (as we all are at HGA) that your studies with world-class raptor carers will facilitate a world-class standard here in Australia.

Thank you for keeping us in the loop, and I will include your letter in our next newsletter.

John and Max will be patting you on the back for your continued work in raptor education and care. Your statement; 'Events of the last week have reinforced my belief that we must do what we can to make a positive difference while we can....'

.. directly paraphrases one of on John's best-known quotes;

"You do what you can do, and I will do what I can do, and together we can make a difference"

Thank you, thank you, thank you - you have our continued love and support

### **Our Trees**

Rhonda has been visiting our trees and ensuring that they have plenty of water. Here is a photo of 'John's' tree.



Big Huge thanks to Rhonda for looking after the trees so beautifully. It is very much appreciated. The people at the Outlook have put aside a really nice area for 'our trees' and they are really looking lovely.

Max's tree is also doing well.



**Newcastle 2015**

We will be celebrating the life and music of John Denver in or near Newcastle NSW next year. I will advise of the venue and costs early next year.

**The John Denver Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame**

John Denver: Recipient of the 2,531st Star in the along the Walk of Fame  
The Hollywood Star is unveiled on Hollywood Boulevard posthumously for musician John Denver, who was represented by two of his three children Zak Deutschendorf (2nd R) and Jesse Belle Denver (3rd R) at the ceremony in Hollywood, Calif., on Oct. 24, 2014. The first musician inducted into the Colorado Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, John Denver hit it big in the 70s with his combination country-pop-folk music which included hits like "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "Rocky Mountain High," the latter of which was honored in 2007 as Colorado's second official song by lawmakers. A portrait of Denver was placed in the state capitol in October 2008 after the posthumous honor. Denver, who was born John Deutschendorf and changed in name to help his musical career, was named as Colorado's poet laureate in 1977. He died in a plane crash Oct. 12, 1997, in California and a memorial service for him was held at Aurora's Faith Presbyterian Church. Denver's ashes were scattered in the Rocky Mountains. (credit: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/Getty Image



**John Denver Receives Star on Hollywood Walk of Fame**



Paul Natkin/WireImage  
October 24, 2014 | 10:00AM PT Malina Sava  
Associate Editor, Features@MalinaSava/

John Denver was 27 years old the summer he moved to Aspen, Colo., a place with which the then-emerging singer-songwriter — born Henry John Deutschendorf, the son of a U.S. Air Force officer — would one day become synonymous. "The Rockies always resonated, and he always wanted to live here," says G. Brown, director of the Colorado Music Hall of Fame (Denver was its first inductee in 2011), who interviewed Denver multiple times during his tenure as a popular music journalist for the Denver Post. "When he got to the mountains he was happy — that's all there is to it. That summer he camped a lot, and he got back to the things he loved most, the

beauty of the land and the quiet of the wilderness, and how precious it was to him. The meteor shower that August was the best meteor shower that John, an amateur astronomer, had ever seen.”

It was this experience of “coming home” that formed the basis of “Rocky Mountain High,” Denver’s lyrical paean to the state, to its “silver clouds” and “the forest and the streams,” and the song that, per Brown, initiated him into the public consciousness when it landed at No. 9 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1973.

On Oct. 24, 17 years after his life was cut tragically short in a private plane crash over Monterey Bay, Calif., Denver will receive his posthumous star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and “Rocky Mountain High,” a campfire standard latent with themes of serenity and peace and the great outdoors (and adopted by Colorado in 2007 as one of its two state songs) will no doubt be on the minds of those celebrating his musical legacy. “He was a troubadour,” says Brown of Denver, whose albums have since sold over 33 million copies. “He was a one of a kind talent. Never sang out of tune. He was a fantastic vocalist. When you listen to a record like ‘Sunshine on My Shoulder’ — the string arrangement, his vocal performance. He was just a phenomenal performer. It’s undeniable.”

Record companies were not quick to sign Denver whose acoustic style was fomented in the folk tradition of the mid-1960s when he came up through the Mitchell Trio, a group produced by the legendary Milt Okun, founder of Cherry Lane Music Publishing Co.



Photo Credit: Dave Hecht

“Folk was over,” recalls Okun. “That was the feeling everyone had. So no one wanted to sign a folk singer, no matter how good. And John was turned down by every company I went to.” But Harry Jenkins at RCA saw potential in Denver, and signed him to a four-album deal. (“That was unheard of in those days,” Okun says.) The arrangement ultimately proved fortuitous for Denver, since the first three albums made little noise, with adequate sales at best. RCA also initiated the partnership between Denver and manager Jerry Weintraub.

“It had ‘Take Me Home, Country Roads,’ ” says Okun of “Poems, Prayers and Promises,” the auspicious fourth album that finally broke through

and signaled the arrival of Denver on the pop music radar. “The song that really got to me was ‘Rhymes and Reasons.’ The lyric, of ‘the children and the flowers are my sisters and my brothers, their laughter and their loveliness would clear a cloudy day...’ just this young kid coming up with these poetic, powerful lines.”

Conversely, there was a circle of critics who famously dismissed Denver as “the Mickey Mouse of Pop” and “the Ronald Reagan of Rock,” but what bothered Denver most were not the naysayers themselves, but the way in which their insults affected his faithful fans.

“That’s aimed at diminishing not only me, but all the folks whose lives have been touched by my music,” Denver told Brown during their final interview. “I still meet people who use my songs in their weddings, who have played them while they are going through labor.”

“He could take the haters,” says Brown, “but he didn’t like that his fans were being diminished, and I always thought that was pretty cool.”

But Denver’s reach went far beyond that of a folk singer with granny glasses and shaggy blond hair. His finger firmly pressed on the hot button of social activism, Denver was a high-profile champion of the environment. Among his many philanthropic pursuits, he spearheaded an opposition movement to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and established the Windstar Foundation, a nonprofit education and demonstration center that studies alternative solutions to food production and energy. Denver’s sunny charisma and passion for the land inspired countless people to move to Colorado and he campaigned heavily to protect its rugged, natural landscape.

“We were the flyover at that point,” says Brown of Colorado’s reputation in the pre-John Denver days. “The Broncos hadn’t yet put us on the map. There was Coors Beer, but that was pretty much it in Colorado. Then John came along and people began to discover the joys of the outdoors and nature. I’ve spoken to people from everywhere who became aware of Colorado through John’s music. ‘I’m from New Zealand,’ they’ll say. I’ll say, ‘Oh, I’m from Colorado.’ And they’ll go, ‘Oh, John Denver!’”

But no matter the heights to which Denver’s popularity soared — he guest-hosted “The Tonight Show” on several occasions and hosted the Grammy Awards five times, not to mention his myriad appearances on “The Muppet Show” — he always remained a “country boy” at heart: humble, loyal and filled with gratitude.

“He was just a nice, gentle person,” says Jay Cooper, Denver’s attorney during the last few years of his life. “He wasn’t the type to force his personality on people. He was very easy, relaxed and always seemed to be enjoying himself and the people around him. He didn’t carry himself off



as a star. You never felt like you needed to bow down or cater to him. He was creative and unique unto himself. He wasn't a follower, nor was he one who jumped on the popular bandwagon of the day. He was a regular person."

### **John Denver Bust Stolen from 1<sup>st</sup> Bank Center**

October 29, 2014 11:55 PM  
BROOMFIELD, Colo. (CBS4)- Police in Broomfield are investigating after the John Denver bust at the 1stBank Center was stolen. The bust was stolen from the main concourse at the event center on Tuesday night during the Saints and Sinners Halloween Ball.



The bust is part of the Colorado Music Hall of Fame and owned by John Denver's family. Anyone who has information about the bust is asked to call police in Broomfield. The 1stBank Center is asking that the bust be returned to the 106.7 KBPI studios unharmed, no questions asked.  
KBPI-FM  
4695 South Monaco Street  
Denver, CO 80237  
(303) 713-8000

### **Jim Curry and Band Performances:**

Tuesday, December 16, 2014  
Pala, California - Pala Casino  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/405/jim-and-anne-curry-present-the-music-of-john-denver-in-pala-california-special-guest-john-sommers/>  
Monday, December 22, 2014  
Altadena, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/424/jim-and-anne-present-the-holiday-music-of-john-denver-special-guest-chris-wills-on-piano/>  
2015  
Thursday, January 29, 2015  
Danbury, Wisconsin - St. Croix Casino  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/426/jim-and-anne-present-the-music-of-john-denver-in-danbury-wisconsin/>  
Sunday, February 1, 2015  
Upland, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/427/jim-and-anne-curry-present-the-music-of-john-denver-in->

### **upland-california-a-fundraiser-for-the-upland-womens-club/**

Saturday, February 7, 2015  
Diamond Bar, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/439/jim-and-anne-curry-perform-the-music-of-john-denver-in-diamond-bar-california/>  
Thursday, February 12, 2015  
North Hollywood, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/431/jim-curry-presents-a-john-denver-celebration-in-north-hollywood-california-with-special-guest-john-sommers/>  
Friday, February 13, 2015  
North Hollywood, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/432/jim-curry-presents-a-john-denver-celebration-in-north-hollywood-california-with-special-guest-john-sommers/>  
Saturday, February 14, 2015  
North Hollywood, California - Matinee  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/433/jim-curry-presents-a-john-denver-celebration-in-north-hollywood-california-with-special-guest-john-sommers-matinee-show/>  
Saturday, February 14, 2015  
North Hollywood, California - Evening Show  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/434/jim-curry-and-band-present-a-john-denver-celebration-in-north-hollywood-with-special-guest-john-sommers-evening-show/>  
Sunday, February 15, 2015  
North Hollywood, California  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/events/435/jim-curry-and-band-present-a-john-denver-celebration-with-special-guest-john-sommers/>  
For more information about Jim Curry and his band, please check out his website  
<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/>

### **... And Lastly...**

Dear Steve,  
Why does one song resonate in the hearts of people but not others?  
I think that in the case of 'Christmas for Cowboys', it answered the one question that we had when we were kids. Each year, we would spend the Christmas holidays with our grandparents in a country town in Victoria. We would sit at the table to eat our Christmas dinner, wearing some of the gifts that Santa had left for us just a few hours prior. A holster with two sharpshooters, a fringed vest, a black hat, bows and arrows (that Santa had made safe by carefully removing the dangerous points and replacing them with suction cups), a hobby horse and other cowboy paraphernalia that children habitually received in 1963.  
'Nana, where do cowboys eat their Christmas dinner?'  
'Do they have to catch their own food and cook it over a campfire? How would you cook a skunk?'



'How does Santa find cowboys?'

I am sure my grandmother had absolutely no idea what a cowboy did at Christmas, but she patiently attempted to answer our questions.

What do kids living on the other side of the earth know about American cowboys? Plenty! We grew up on a healthy diet of American cowboy shows on TV, and we savoured each episode of Bonanza, Wagon Train, the Adventures of Rin Tin Tin, and Davy Crocket, to name but a few. We re-enacted so many of the scenes of those shows, storylines that ran in the same direction each time, which is how I was tied to a totem pole pretty much every day. As the bullants would march toward me to eat the flesh off my bones, the handsome cowboy would come and save me – but I digress.....Those were happy times, and it seems that many of my generation shared similar experiences as we did'

When I first heard; 'Christmas for Cowboys', it must have been in the early 1980s and it was in a shopping centre. Suddenly those happy, carefree days came flooding back to me. I knew that John Denver was singing it, and I spent a good few hours looking for that song in the various record stores I visited during that Christmas period. It was not so easy to find single songs in those days and it would be another few years before I got hold of a copy of this song on a CD. It quickly became a favourite.

I was delighted to 'meet' you through this newsletter so many years later. It was an absolute honour to meet you in person in 2012, when, along with my very good friends, we spent a few hours having a few laughs with you, not to mention the lively discussions we had about music in general. We thoroughly enjoyed the 'Up Close and Personal' concert in the Limelight Hotel, where you told us the story behind the song, along with your personal memories of performing with John Denver. These will be my treasured memories of the 'bloke' behind the song.

Steve, Christmas is almost upon us now and whilst you may now have one of the best backing bands, complete with a choir of celestial voices up there, you are greatly missed, but also very much remembered for a song, and for your deep and lifelong friendship. Nobody knew then the battle you were to face as we made plans to meet again 'next

time'. We thank you for the song, and we thank you for the memories, and most of all, we thank you for a friendship that was far too shortlived. Oh, and if you look hard enough, you may come across a couple of the cowboys of my childhood – just watch out for the bullants.....

Merry Christmas, my friend, I will be listening carefully for those introductory notes playing on the breeze as it blows through the trees.



Steve's Tree (photo by Rhonda)

Our lyrics for this month are well-loved Christmas songs dedicated to John. The first one is, **Christmas Like a Lullaby**, which was written about celebrating Christmas in Australia, but it could refer to anyone celebrating Christmas away from home and from many members of the family. The second one is **Christmas for Cowboys**, in loving memory of Steve.

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.



## Christmas Like a Lullaby (John Denver)



*Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land  
A breeze upon the water, rainfall upon the sand  
We celebrate a baby born from spirit into man  
And Christmas like a lullaby steals across the  
land*

*It's morning in Australia; In fact it's Christmas  
day*

*And Colorado never seemed so very far away  
Back where night has fallen and it's still Christmas Eve  
And snow is on the mountains where I always hate to leave*

*Here I am down under with a brand new family  
And Christmas bells are ringing  
And there's presents 'neath the tree  
I know that it's been said before and now I know it's true  
That home is where the heart is  
And Christmas lives there too  
And on this morning Peace on Earth  
Is still our fervent prayer  
And I can hear it being  
Whispered softly everywhere*

*And guns are called to silence  
And anger called to still  
And brotherhood and sisterhood  
Surrounded by goodwill*

*Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land  
A breeze upon the water, rainfall upon the  
sand  
We celebrate a baby born from spirit into man  
And Christmas like a lullaby steals across the  
land*



## Christmas for Cowboys

(Steve Weisberg)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZh2IM-FQms>

*Tall in the saddle we spend Christmas Day  
Drivin' the cattle on the snow covered-plains.  
All of the good gifts given today,  
Ours is the sky and the wide open range.*

*Back in the city they have different ways,  
Football and eggnog and Christmas  
parades.  
I'll take the blanket, I'll take the reins,  
Christmas for cowboys and wide open  
plains.*

*A campfire for warmth as we stop for the  
night,  
The stars overhead are the Christmas tree  
lights.  
The wind sings a hymn as we bow down to  
pray,  
It's Christmas for cowboys and wide open  
plains.*



*It's tall in the saddle we spend Christmas Day,  
Drivin' the cattle on the snow-covered plains.  
So many gifts have been opened today,  
Ours is the sky and the wide open range.  
It's Christmas for cowboys and wide open plains.*

