



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

<http://www.hgavic.com>

CONTACT:
Janette Frawley
hga.vic@gmail.com

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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – December, 2020



WELCOME

It's been a tough year.

It's Christmas Eve in Australia and as I'm writing this very short newsletter, my pudding is gently simmering on the stove. I have potatoes boiled and mashed and ready to be used to stuff the turkey later, whilst everything else is prepared and ready to be cooked tomorrow.

There will be someone missing from our table tomorrow. Our youngest daughter, Natasha, lives in London and will be celebrating Christmas alone. Everything has gone awry this year. Even the Christmas gift I posted on December 2 by Express Post is still sitting at Melbourne airport, with little-to-no hope of arriving before 2021. Fortunately for us, there is technology and the wonder of WhatsApp, which will allow us to catch up and see each other albeit through a screen. There will be millions of people using phones and computers to bring some cheer to their family members as so many of us will be unable to celebrate with our loved ones.

The rest of our Christmas table will be greatly reduced as we all decided to have separate, small Christmas celebrations this year. Despite not having the usual large and raucous crowds, we are all happy in the knowledge that our friends and family are all healthy and happy. We have much to be thankful for.

But we are the lucky ones.

Family traditions have been central to this year's Christmas preparations. Decorating the tree has become more meaningful, lights more special, food preparation more careful. COVID has taught us some very important lessons in life, and nothing is more important than family.

Wherever you are on Christmas day, have a wonderful day even if you are alone. Play lots of Christmas music, especially John Denver, sing, watch corny Christmas movies, and call someone to say hello.

Next Friday, at 12am, a new decade starts. We hope that this will herald a new beginning and hopefully we

can look forward to a healthier and happier year ahead. Best wishes to you all.

HGA TRIBUTE – SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE

Despite the restrictions in 2020, we hope to meet informally during the coming year. Australia is generally COVID-free, with small spikes appearing here and there. Once our state leaders agree to keep the borders open permanently, we can try to arrange a little get-together sometime after mid-year – if immunisation programmes are up to speed. The HGA web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>. Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com with your photos, comments, and feedback.

HIGHER GROUND RAPTORS

Coronavirus may have stopped the world in its tracks, but our natural world still needs help. Peggy McDonald's work with rehabilitating raptors doesn't stop because of the Coronavirus.

If you have any spare change, please donate to this worthy cause through Peggy's website. All monies raised through donation and fundraisers is used for special projects. Check out Peggy's website also to see the photos of the recent upgrade to the circular aviary, which is used for the rehabilitation of birds prior to their release back into the wild.

www.highergroundraptors.com and
<https://www.facebook.com/HigherGroundRaptors>.

Click the link to view an older story on Peggy and her work, which was aired on the ABC.

<https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/caring-for-injured-birds-of-prey/11290932?jwsourc=em>

Peggy sends her deepest apologies for missing our Zoom meeting in October. We may try to organise another one in the new year.

DEEPEST CONDOLENCES

I was shocked to hear of the sudden passing of Emily Parris, long-time JD acquaintance and author of the Rocky Mountain Newsletter. If you wish to leave a message of condolence, you can do so on this site: <https://obituaries.neptunesociety.com/obituaries/kansas-city-mo/emily-parris-9895406?fbclid=IwAR2LP->

[kFmmZj5MIZjDQhJwAv5rs_6_tF2oTF0fKhUJlykOWbV_aCBS3e9X4](https://www.parrispublishing.com/kFmmZj5MIZjDQhJwAv5rs_6_tF2oTF0fKhUJlykOWbV_aCBS3e9X4)

Emily was a prolific writer of poetry and published many books through Amazon. If you wish to check out her extensive library, follow this link;

www.parrispublishing.com

Lastly, I would like to share one of Emily's poems here

If John Were Here

©Emily M Parris 12/10/2020

If John were here, he would sing a song
To give us hope and cheer,
A song to encourage us to have faith
That we'll get through this year

If John were here, he would serenade us
With words simple, loving, and true
He would find the words and a melody
He would sing a song brand new

He always knew how to inspire us
Through a dark and troubled night
If John were here, he would find a way
To bring us all into the light

FROM THE ARCHIVES

From My Archive (2010)

At this time of year, many of us reflect upon the year that has passed. Each year, as I reread the letter Steve wrote for this newsletter in 2010, I reflect on our John Denver family and especially those who have passed during the year. I'm dedicating this year's newsletter to those who died this year, especially Pat Feldmeier, who, along with Steve, we miss very much.

Janette,

I've put this off so long because I really wanted to say it right. I've now given up on that, and I just want to ramble on a bit, ad lib, and get this out before Christmas. What happened in Aspen this past October changed my life forever. This was an experience unlike any I've had. I'd always had a very hard time believing that our music actually impacted so many people. This outlook was forged by several attitudes; one was that we were simply 'playing' music, not 'working', and therefore it was to be taken lightly. Another reason was undoubtedly a simple case of 'I'm not worthy'. Of all that praise. All that applause. Add to that that I was really just a kid, emotionally less mature than our average listener (I valued wit over wisdom, heart over warmth). Whoever said it's a pity youth is wasted on the young had my number. So, as we travelled the globe to adoring fans, I just never understood what the big deal was. That admission is my little

testimonial to the fact that I'm usually the last one to know most things. I had an awakening just before Aspen, when I was told that the fans now went there as much to see each other as for the concerts. It finally dawned on me that I'd had a hand in something that truly did bring people together. I'd been told this forever, but was always so hesitant to believe it. So 35 years later, they proved it to me in the most unassuming ways, via my little semi-private events in my hotel room. People from all over the world just came in and chatted with me; telling stories of where they were first time they heard a song ... telling me why it was so meaningful. So it was 'the fans' who finally helped me make sense of those years gone by, and why they still resound. By befriending people like your own Ray & Diane Dunk, I finally began to understand the real power of music. We joked, we hung out. We'll be friends for life. All because we are truly... just the same. John knew it and sang about it. I wanted to believe it, but just got proof month before last. This October I finally got off the pedestal, and joined those who never (ever) let go of what we played so long ago. What I discovered was that I'd craved being part of a bigger family, as an insider, with their permission and acceptance. This year I was hardly concerned with being on stage. My real need was to finally begin joining this global family, rather than merely playing to it through that invisible barrier between performer and audience. I wanted to actually begin knowing who they were, so I could hear from them why they were so attached to and by these simple songs. Mind you, I've never met a performer who didn't like that invisible curtain. I still do, but only from onstage, which comprises only a small part of my human experience. I now know that performing (which I'll always do) is far less fulfilling than performing and then... just 'being among people'. As you laugh and hug your families and friends this holiday season, you'll be feeling exactly what I felt with people who'd always been strangers before. I wish I'd discovered this earlier, but it's never too late to expand my world, by letting people closer. What I got in Aspen was something I'd never have wanted 'back in the day'. I now, suddenly, wanted to let people from all over get to know who I really am, beyond my role as musician. I wanted to finally join the human race, as a commoner, using John's fans as my pivot-point. I've always been grateful for the career, the money, the special status, etc.... which has been granted to me by being so closely linked with John. But now I'm beginning to be the beneficiary of something much richer; of being simply a common guy who had an uncommon gig. Thanks to a few dozen people in Aspen, I now finally realize that the biggest gift we ever receive is to simply... be human. I usually do have a way with words, but the experience I had is apparently beyond my ability to describe it. It was too

emotional for words. It was, at 61, through the help of friends I met, my first real involvement in just being a happy member of the human race. Janette, I really promise to hone my literary style before my next letter! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Steve Weisberg December 22, 2010 "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing".



TRIBUTE ARTISTS

Check out your favourite tribute artists. Although everyone is hibernating at the moment, check out their pages to when they are next (hopefully) performing:

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

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

CHRIS WESTFALL

<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

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 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 diff'rent 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.



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

