



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

<http://www.hgavic.com>

CONTACT:
Janette Frawley
hga.vic@gmail.com

Volume 22 – Edition 2

HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – September 2025

WELCOME

My apologies for the lateness of this newsletter. In a perfect world, I would have had it out last week before the 2025 AIO event. I hope that everyone in Aspen/Snowmass is having a wonderful time. I'm also glad that the Maroon Bells has so far remained open despite so many other National and State parks being closed. It is my hope that you all enjoy your time in the mountains and that you will remain safe. I am happy to see Ben Shapard made it back to Snowmass after his accident last year. I wish for everyone a safe journey home at the end of AIO. Special thanks to Lawrie Stowers who keeps everyone in the loop with what is happening during the year and for her exceptional networking skills. We are thinking of you enjoying the beautiful autumn season, the company of friends, and the music made by those around you. And while you sing John's words that yearn for peace across the globe, spare a thought for those facing challenges in this current chaotic world.

It's also the time to remember the fun times we had in Aspen with our friends who have since passed away. There are far too many to list here, but you would have your own special memories. I often think that the friendships we have formed in Aspen would not have happened if it not for the sudden and tragic death of John. The annual pilgrimage to Colorado to remember a man and to celebrate his music for the past 28 years is a wonderful thing. Personally, I think of Pat Feldemeier, Steve Weisberg, Billy Jacobs, and Susan, who fought so valiantly to make it to Aspen just one last time before passing away at the Aspen hospital. The next few items on this newsletter read like the obituary pages in a local paper. We have lost friends, local identities, and others very recently and I have attempted to pay tribute to them in the best way I can.

VALE ALISTAIR WILSON

One of our beloved founding members, Alistair Wilson passed away on 27 July 2025 aged 80 years. Alistair was an active member, who designed, ordered, and brought along the brass plaques that we placed in front of the main tree we planted for John at each of our gatherings. A bush poet, a drummer and member of the Hi-Fis in regional NSW, singer, and owner of a Winnebago that travelled many, many kilometres across Australia and that gave him and Carmel much

happiness. In later years they would take the motor home to Bowen in Queensland for the winter to escape the freezing cold Cessnock winters. Each year for our Higher Ground Australia gatherings, he and Carmel would arrive in the motor home and organise singalongs, the BBQs, and more. Alistair was a focal point in all our activities, and most importantly, was the chief hole digger for our trees. He did have assistants though! Alistair wrote a letter to Max Moore in around 2005, which resulted in Max being an active and special member of Higher Ground Australia. We extend our deepest condolences to Carmel, Rachael and Michael and to their families. Alistair was much loved and will be missed by all of us.



VALE COL JOYE

Just a few days after Alistair's passing, we got news that beloved Australian musician and good friend of John Denver, Colin Jacobsen or better known as Col Joye, died on 5 August 2025. Col is the brother of Kevin Jacobsen, Australia's most successful promoter and personal friend of John Denver. In 2011, Max

invited his friends, including Col and his other brother Keith, to our Higher Ground Australia gathering in the Southern Highlands in NSW. It was to be Max's last year with us. Col, over breakfast, wrote a song especially for Max, which he played during our tree planting. Of course, they told us plenty of 'John and Max' stories, which we lapped up. Col Joye was a true entertainer and a very nice man, as Carolyn would attest.



<https://www.smh.com.au/national/col-joye-was-first-teen-idol-who-sparked-riots-made-girls-swoon-but-silly-parents-loved-him-20220404-p5aap.html>

OTHER NOTABLE AND RECENT DEATHS

I attended a concert at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville last year and was lucky to see Country star **Jeannie Seely**, who, at the age of almost 84, was brilliant. Jeannie passed away on 1 August 2025 at the age of 85.

Robert Redford, actor, director and producer, co-founder of the Sundance Film Festival, and environmentalist died on 16 September 2025 at the age of 89. I think it is safe to say that John and Robert knew each other, perhaps even had a beer together at some stage. I just love the fashion in this photo.



Hal Thau, accountant and John Denver's business manager passed away on 26 September 2025. I found this article from The Aspen times, which outlines some of his achievements. Also, his memoir *Bronx to Broadway: A Life in Show Business* is quite a good read.

<https://www.aspentimes.com/news/hal-thaus-john-denver-holiday-concert-keeps-the-spirit-alive/>

MY TIME WITH JOHN DENVER – JIMMY FONG

Jimmy Fong's *My Time with John Denver* show held on 26 July 2025 was a sold-out success. Congratulations, Jimmy. Jimmy tells his story of how he taught himself to play the guitar and sing in English by listening to radio programs transmitted from the RAAF base in Butterworth, Malaysia and how it led him on a path that would eventually cross with that of John Denver.



Hopefully Jimmy can lock in another date for his *My Time with John Denver* show later this year. I'll keep you posted.

HIGHER GROUND AUSTRALIA

Whilst we have not organised any formal gatherings for some time, our circle of members remains strong, and we keep in regular touch with each other.

Recently, Carolyn, Laraine, and I travelled with another friend to Ireland via Paris and London to celebrate Carolyn's 80th birthday. Taking a cruise to circumnavigate Ireland, we found ourselves being re-routed when storm Floris hit the northern parts of Scotland. Fortunately, early warnings prevented us from experiencing the rough seas experienced by other ships in the vicinity at the time. All in all, our get together was wonderful and we have many new stories to share next time we meet up with our other members.

All going well between now and 2027, I should be ready to take a road trip to Colorado for the 30th anniversary in Aspen/Snowmass to enjoy the music of the mountains, to catch up with some familiar faces, and to explore the amazing landscape.

Fingers crossed and I would be happy to chat with anyone who is interested in taking a US road trip during October 2027.

Website: www.hgavic.com

Email: hga.vic@gmail.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/highergroundaustralia>

ASPEN IN OCTOBER 2025

AIO is currently being in Snowmass between 1 and 6 October 2025 and that the entire Mountain Chalet has been booked by AIO guests. I hope that you have enjoyed the concerts at the iconic Wheeler Opera House over the weekend.

Mack Bailey and Chris Nole will be presenting their *Spirit: The Music of John Denver* at the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen on Friday 3 October 2025 at 7:30 PM, and Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon will be presenting *An Evening of the Music of John Denver* at



the Wheeler Opera House on Saturday 4 October 2025 at 7:30 PM. Tickets are selling fast and are available from <https://aspenshowtix.com/>.

Aspen, Snowmass and the surrounding areas are especially beautiful in October, and if the weather is fine, find some time to explore.

AN EXCITING JD PROJECT IN THE PIPELINE

People like us can never forget the music that John Denver produced, and unlike many stars who have passed during my lifetime, John's music remains relevant, and his fan base seems to be growing. Books, biopics, documentaries, tribute artists have all entered the John Denver pool of memories since he died in October 1997. And just when I thought that most new and innovative ideas had been exhausted, someone has come up with a concept that is so beautiful and inspiring that I cannot wait to see the finished product. But all things take time and the unscripted independent film that is in the works needs some extra finance to get it over the line. With the working title of Windsong, I will keep you posted on its progress. In the meantime, if any of you are interested in or know someone that has the sort of funds that would make a difference in a project such as this, email hga.vic@gmail.com me and I will put you in contact with the filmmaker.

Please note that I am not personally involved in the project but am merely an initial contact for interested parties.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

'SOME DAYS ARE DIAMONDS – ONE MAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH AUSTRALIAN ENTERTAINMENT' BY MAX MOORE

New Holland Publishers P/L 2003. Pages 237-.

Here is another excerpt from the memoir of our much loved late friend, Max Moore.

When Australia won the America's cup in 1983, John was booked by the Cup Committee to perform in Perth as part of the celebrations. His booking agent at the time was Sal Bonafede, a well-respected and astute American who handled many international artists. Sal suggested that, after Perth, Kevin Jacobsen Productions could do a John Denver tour around the rest of Australia, and we readily agreed. The tour was set up and, as the time approached for John's arrival, I mentioned to Kevin that Sal expected me to be in Perth to greet him but, as the Perth gig was separate from the tour and nothing to do with Kevin Jacobson Productions, there was no reason for me to be there.

The next time Sal rang, Kevin told him that I wasn't needed in Perth and Sal was stunned, 'What do you mean, Max won't be in Perth? Denver won't go anywhere in Australia without Max. Tell him to get his arse over there or the whole Australian tour is off.' John always said he felt confident whenever he saw

my face at the various airports around Australia, so I took off for Perth to meet him and his crew. We completed the America's Cup celebrations and the tour afterwards was fantastic.

John loved to take everyone for a meal after his shows and he was intrigued to hear stories of the old days of rock 'n' roll in Australia, as he had gone through exactly the same baptism in the States as we had with Col Joye and the Joy Boys. I must admit that his band and crew members probably grew a bit tired of hearing the same old tales, and I'm quite sure they would have been happier being out on the town, chasing women and doing their own thing.

In 1986, after one of these after-show dinners in Melbourne, he asked me whether my mother was still alive/ 'Yes,' I said. 'She lives in Sydney and she is eighty-eight years old.'

'Is she coming to my Sydney show?' he said.

'I don't think so, John. She has a very bad leg and doesn't go out much at night.' He said that he'd very much like to meet her and was prepared to go and visit her at home, but the visit wasn't necessary because Mum was thrilled when I told her that John Denver wanted her to go to one of his shows in Sydney.

Complimentary tickets were arranged for her and her baby sister Jose, who had just turned eighty-two, and John ordered his stretch limousine to collect them and drive them to the Entertainment Centre. Our security chief, Peter McCall, was on hand with a camera to take photographs of Mum and Auntie Jose arriving at the centre.

Sydney's Entertainment Centre has a huge car park at the back that's usually packed with fans hoping to get a glimpse of the stars as they arrive for each show. As soon as the stretch limo appeared, they all assumed it was John and started cheering. Auntie Jose thought this was great and waved back at them like the Queen of England. Meantime, Mum was sitting in the front with the driver and, when I opened the limo door and the cameras started to flash, I asked her why she chose to sit up front. She said, 'Well, son, you know I have a bad leg and there is much more room in the front of cars.'

'Mum, have you had a look in the back?' I said. 'You could have fully stretched out back there.' The cameras kept flashing.

Meryl and I, and two close friends, Tony and Rosemary McIntyre, sat with Mum and Auntie Jose during the show and we all had a terrific night. It was not practical for us to meet up with John before the performance, so we all went backstage after the show. He came up to us, put his arm around me and said to Mum, 'I love this man.'



And Mum answered in no uncertain manner, 'And so do I.' Then she dropped the bombshell, 'You didn't sing my favourite song.' I was dumbfounded as I didn't know she had one. John turned to me and wanted to know why he hadn't been told that she had a favourite song, and I had no answer. Her favourite John Denver song was 'Some Days are Diamonds'.



With John Denver, Auntie Jose and Mum (far left) after she complained, 'You didn't sing my favourite song, "Some Days are Diamonds".'

I had arranged for a standard limo to bring John to the venue as the stretch was being used to collect Mum and Aunt Jose and then reversed the arrangement for after the show. When I told John about the change, he was adamant that Mum was to go home in the stretch and that he would again take the standard.

Meryl and I always went to the international airport whenever John left the country and invariably he would say, 'When are you guys coming to visit me in Aspen? There's a room in my house with your name on it.'

AFTERWORD

Max and Meryl did make it to Aspen in June 1995 after Max's retirement. As you can expect, their holiday did not go to plan when their ship to Alaska hit a rock, and the cruise had to be abandoned. At that point, the cruise company were trying to send Max and Meryl back to Australia and would not believe Max when he said that he was staying with John Denver. After the cruise people spoke to John themselves, they dispatched Max and Meryl to Seattle where John would personally collect them in his private jet.

TRIBUTE ARTISTS

Check out your favourite tribute artists.

CATHY GIANFALA CARRIERE

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

MARK CORMICAN

<http://markcormican.com/>

JIM CURRY

<https://jimcurrymusic.com/>

TOM BECKER/BACK HOME AGAIN

A tribute to John Denver. Tom Becker's next Back Home Again show will be held in Pittsburgh, PA on 25 October 2025. For tickets, click the link below.

<https://johndenvertribute.net/>

CHRIS COLLINS AND BOULDER CANYON

Please check the Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon website for their concert schedule and other information.

<https://www.johndenvertributeband.com/>

CHRIS WESTFALL

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

JOHN ADAMS

[HTTPS://WWW.JOHNADAMSBAND.COM/](https://www.johnadamsband.com/)

CHRIS BANNISTER

<https://chrisbannistermusic.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>

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

THIS MONTH'S LYRICS

Last night, just before midnight in Melbourne, Australia, and before the news and the 'late night radio' host took over, John's recording of 'The Box' was played. The whole poem, and the way in which John recited it for this recording were especially poignant. I hope that peace can be restored in the Middle East and in Ukraine and that we can learn to live peacefully with each other.

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.



The Box

(Lascelles Abercrombie)

Once upon a time in the land of Hush-a-bye
Around about the wondrous days of yore
I came across a sort of box
Bound up with chains and locked with locks
And labeled kindly do not touch; it's war

Decree was issued 'round about
All with a flourish and a shout
And a gaily colored mascot tripping lightly on before
Don't fiddle with this deadly box, or break the chains, or pick the locks
And please, don't ever play about with war

Well, the children understood
Children happen to be good
They were just as good around the time of yore
They didn't try to pick the locks, or break into that deadly box
They never tried to play about with war
Mummies didn't either, sisters, aunts, grannies neither
Cause they were quiet, and sweet, and pretty in those wondrous days of yore
Well, very much the same as now, not the ones to blame somehow
For opening up that deadly box of war

But someone did
Someone battered in the lid and spilled the insides out across the floor
A sort of bouncy, bumpy ball made up of guns and flags
And all the tears, and horror, and the death that goes with war
It bounced right out and went bashing all about
And bumping into everything in store
And what was sad and most unfair is that it didn't seem to care
who much it bumped, or why, or what, or for.

It bumped the children mainly
And I'll tell you this quite plainly
It bumps them every day, and more and more,
and leaves them dead and burned and dying, thousands of them sick and crying
Cause when it bumps, it's really very sore

Now, there's a way to stop the ball, it isn't difficult at all
All it takes is wisdom; I'm absolutely sure that we could get it back into the box
And bind the chains and lock the locks
No one seems to want to save the children any more

Well, that's the way it all appears
Cause it's been bouncing 'round for years and years
In spite of all the wisdom since those wondrous days of yore
And the time they came across the box
Bound up with chains and locked with locks
And labeled "kindly do not touch, it's war"



The Peace Poem

(John Denver)

For peace around the world...

'If peace is our vision, let us begin.'

There's a name for war and killing
There's a name for giving in
When you know another answer
For me the name is sin
But there's still time to turn around
And make all hatred cease
And give another name to living
And we could call it peace

And peace would be the road we walk
Each step along the way
And peace would be the way we work
And peace the way we play
And in all we see that's different
And in all the things we know
Peace would be the way we look
And peace the way we grow

There's a name for separation
There's a name for first and last
When it's all for us or nothing
For me the name is past
But there's still time to turn around
And make all hatred cease
And give a name to all the future
And we could call it peace

And if peace is what we pray for
And peace is what we give
Then peace will be the way we are
And peace the way we live
Yes, there still is the time to turn around
And make all hatred cease
And give another name to living
And we can call it peace

