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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – February 2014

Welcome

Happy new year to you all and I hope that 2014 proves to be a lucky one for you. We have recently returned from South America, visiting Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. What an experience! We saw so many wonderful sights, far too many to describe here. We also met some quite



remarkable and interesting people whilst we were away, one of whom is the famous folk singer from the 1970s – Pablo Rosetti. He told us that he was half of a duo Pachi y Pablo and

asked us to 'google' him, which we did! They had two hit singles in 1972, at first and second place on the Billboard charts for 16 weeks. Pablo was a most interesting man to speak to (thank goodness, his English is

impeccable), and we had a nice chat to him for a few minutes before going our separate ways. Our other 'musical' experience was our visit to the restaurant where 'The Girl from Ipanema' was written. This iconic restaurant in the middle of Ipanema in Rio de Janeiro, was not only decorated with memorabilia from 'the son', but it was a nice restaurant as well.

All too soon, our holiday was over and I opened my email and could not believe how many JD-inspired emails I had received over the past few weeks. I will now try to pass on to you all the recent JD news.

2014 JD Tribute Weekend

Vicki has organised our tribute weekend from Friday 10th – Sunday 12th October. We are holding the weekend in Boonah Queensland, at the Outlook Centre. Mark this weekend in your calendars and we would love to see you all in October. More details will be published over the next couple of months. At this stage, we do not have to pay a deposit to the Outlook Centre for the weekend. In March, we will ask you to pay the



food kitty, which will serve as your non-refundable deposit.

We have also been thinking of having a Christmas theme this year, and this will be confirmed soon.

From the Wilsons!

We have had a lovely time with Vicki. One of our little adventures was to Morpeth. It is a little old village with craft shops etc not far from Cessnock. Couldn't believe my eyes when we parked, the first shop we went into was **Grandma's Feather Bed**, the book shop had a book about **the Rocky Mountains**, last one had music playing and it was Damien Leith singing **Sunshine on my Shoulder's**. A very JD day despite the 37degree heat. Vicki flew back to Brisbane yesterday afternoon.

My Time with John Denver

I received this email from a JD tribute singer in Melbourne;

My name is Jimmy Fong. I live in Melbourne & I am a singer songwriter as well as a huge John Denver fan. Last year I produced & played in, two sellout shows in Upwey. The show is called My Time With John Denver & we are planning another show on 22/2/2014 at Knox Community Arts Centre in the auditorium in Bayswater.

The show is based on a very personal story of meeting the man himself & playing his music with him many years ago in Malaysia. Along with my band & cast of 15, we play & entertain our audience with many favourite songs of JD. We have had an overwhelming response to the last two shows so we have taken it to a larger venue this time in Bayswater.

Janette could you please help us to promote the show by way of advertising on your website as well as in your newsletter? We would be very grateful to you if you could help spread the word.

Here is the link for booking tickets.

<http://www.trybooking.com/Booking/BookingEventSummary.aspx?eid=71960>

Musician Jimmy Fong bringing his John Denver tribute show to Bayswater

January 05, 2014 12:00AM – Staff Writer From: Knox Leader

AFTER a successful run in the hills, musician Jimmy Fong is bringing his John Denver tribute show to Bayswater.

Fong, who will perform *My Time with John Denver* at Knox Community Art Centre on February 22,

performed with the country star before he died in 1997.

In 1994, Fong was asked to play with Denver in a private performance in Malaysia for the Sultan of Kedah.

"I was humbled in John Denver's presence and this tribute show is inspired by that meeting with him," Fong said.

Fong, who grew up in Penang, was influenced by Western artists including The Beatles and John Denver.

He said he spent many a day listening to Radio RAAF Butterworth - broadcast from the Royal Australian Air Force base in the Malaysian town - and learning the guitar.



"I was a child during the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation during 1962-66 and we weren't allowed to go out of the house and play," Fong said.

"So I listened to music and Radio RAAF Butterworth was a big influence on me." Fong moved to Australia in the early 1980s but went back to his homeland in the 1990s.

Now living in St Helena, Fong performs regularly with his band The Baby Boomers, which includes Upper Ferntree Gully's Ray Smith and Robin Westwood from The Basin.

The Fongettes, a band of local women, will be an addition to the show.

Visit the *My Time with John Denver* Facebook page or YouTube channel.

American Veterans Radio – The Music of John Denver

Willie Hoovers will be presenting the next radio show on **Saturday 15th February at 4pm (EST). This is about 10am Sunday 16th February.**

www.avradio.org



SHHHH Willie will be inviting a special guest this week, so make sure you listen in to this show. Willie also said that over 3000 people participated in some way for John's 70th Birthday Party Around the World. The Facebook page also got 11,000 'Likes'. The January 18th show was dedicated to

John's mum, Erma, who passed away on January 17, 2010.

This wonderful show is gaining momentum, so please join in if you can – especially this week!

The World Game

Gary Shaw has made the observation:

I can't believe there's not a decent YouTube video for this great JD song.. I don't like reggae, but I love John's reggae song and such great lyrics! Contact me if you know of a video of this song.

[\(Check out our lyrics for this newsletter, Gary\)](#)

John Denver, photographer, at Leon Gallery

January 14 8:37 am The Denver Post

The late pop star [John Denver](#) is legend in these parts and not just because he shared a name with our state capital.

With sharp — and sometimes cloying — precision, his music captured the mountain spirit of his day: Freewheeling, sentimental, optimistic. Denver was also a photographer, toting his camera along on concert tours, backpacking trips and jaunts around the globe, and his visual work, on display at [Leon Gallery](#), shares some of that same tone. It has what you'd expect from the author of chart toppers like "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "Sunshine On My Shoulders" — scenes of nature, up close and personal and people, near and far.

The photos are colorful and sunny, like his songs. If you can't help but hum along to "Rocky Mountain High," this exhibit of his work is for you.

Through March 3, Leon Gallery, 1112 East 17th Ave. Info at 303-832-1599 or

www.leongallery.com



Melbourne will Always Love Dolly Parton

Last night, we went to see Dolly Parton. She is currently undertaking her Blue Smoke tour, and the concert is wonderful.

Rod Laver Arena, Tuesday, February 11

When Dolly Parton's parents named her, they couldn't have known that their daughter would go on to become one of the biggest country music stars of all time. The perfect stage name as birth name might have been a fortuitous blessing, but most else of Parton's career, spanning more than 50 years, has been the result of good old-fashioned hard work. That she looks like a Barbie seems to have helped rather than hindered her.

As Parton herself jokes, blonde jokes are water off



a duck's back when she knows she's neither dumb nor blonde, and so legendary are those enormous false breasts that Dolly the sheep, derived from a mammary gland cell, was named after the singer.

Distracting as her top half is, there's a whole lot more to Dolly, as she reminded us on Tuesday night. Back in Australia after a relatively recent visit in 2011 (her first in 24 years), to tour her 42nd album *Blue Smoke*, to date Parton has sold in excess of 100 million records worldwide. Beyonce is the only other female artist with as many Grammy nominations to her name – a staggering 46.

As she totters out on stage in a pair of stilettos and sparkly white dress and profusely thanks the crowd for coming, it's clear that while much of Parton might be fake, vitally, her appreciation for her fans never comes across as anything less than sincere.

Don't be fooled either by the rocks that she's got either – the fourth of 12 children born to "dirt-poor" parents in Tennessee, Parton has never forgotten her roots, and in concert pays tribute to her Smoky Mountains home with a slew of old songs commemorating them, including *Smoky Mountain Memories* and *My Tennessee Mountain Home*.

Between songs, there's banter, and no one does banter better than Dolly. Whether reminiscing about her parents or talking about her Imagination Library charity providing books for underprivileged children, which she launched in Australia on Tuesday, she's never short of an anecdote or joke – many of which are as old as those Tennessee hills. Delivered with that infectious giggle, though, it's hard not to smile along with her.

For many fans in the sold-out crowd (mainly women of a certain age), it's hard not to sing along with her too, particularly on favourites like *Jolene*, *Coat of Many Colours* and *Here You Come Again*.

There was a costume change after interval – a fabulous, hot pink, fringed skirt suit – and Parton showed her proficiency in many instruments throughout, from guitar to banjo and dulcimer to a particularly cute turn on the sax.

As good as she looks at 68, it's the sound of her voice, clear and strong, that impresses most, particularly when singing a capella on *Little Sparrow*, and a cover of *Banks of the Ohio*.

It was one of the better covers of the evening, Bob Dylan's *Think Twice* being another, but her bluegrass version of *Shine* by '90s rockers Collective Soul is both treacly and preachy. Her take on Bon Jovi's *Lay your Hands on Me* suffers the same fate, complete with a stained glass projected backdrop. "You don't see too many atheists on the deathbed," jokes the proud Christian. "They all start cramming then." Whatever the religious persuasion of the audience, in their worship of Dolly they were

united. The upbeat *Islands in the Stream* and *9 to 5* drew the crowd out of their seats and after *I Will Always Love You* finished the night, Dolly fans – some wearing cowboy boots and pink Dolly cowboy hats purchased from the merchandise stands – sailed out into the night gushing over the woman who is perhaps loved as much for her unfailingly sunny demeanour as for her bulging songbook.

"She's really humble, introducing all the members of her band like that," said one. "Matt Bellamy from Muse didn't do that. He's a mug. :

<http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/music/review-melbourne-will-always-love-dolly-parton-20140212-32gen.html#ixzz2t6xf7Wuz>

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton launched her 'Imagination Library' here in Australia yesterday. It is designed to improve literacy in families that are struggling by sending each child aged up to five years of age, a book through the mail each month.

Dolly Parton Speaks Volumes for Literacy DOLLY Parton was one of 12 kids who grew up in the hills of east Tennessee and did not have much in the way of books apart from the Bible.

Her father was "the smartest person I have ever known", but he could not read or write, nor could some other members of her family.

With her songwriting talent, southern charm and the most famous boobs in showbusiness, Parton went on to conquer the country and pop charts, selling more than 100 million albums.

In recent years she has also devoted some of her attention to the Imagination Library, a literacy program supported by her Dollywood Foundation. The Imagination Library will deliver a free book a month to children in up to 40,000 Australian families. Overseas, the program has delivered 56 million books to children in four countries.

"We had so many kids in the house that we could not take books home," Parton said in Melbourne yesterday at the start of a national concert tour.

"Kids would chew them up and pee on them... But we always had the Bible in our house and I always loved books."

Parton is visiting these shores on her Blue Smoke World Tour, singing songs from her new album *Blue Smoke* and such favourites as *Jolene* and *I Will Always Love You*.

She met the press yesterday in a figure-hugging black dress with silver buckles, and red-painted nails like talons.

Her wardrobe strategy, she said, was to buy clothes a size too small and then have them taken in.

In a half-hour peppered with one-liners - "I will never graduate from collagen" - Parton cheerfully answered questions about her 47-year marriage, rumours about a lesbian relationship with her friend and assistant Judy, and about her famous goddaughter, Miley Cyrus.



She said she started the Imagination Library because illiteracy had disadvantaged people close to her.

The Australian program will deliver specially selected books to children up to age five. Among the books are Mem Fox's *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes*, Tohby Riddle's *My Uncle's Donkey*, and Alison Lester's *Are We There Yet?* The Dollywood Foundation is providing financial and in-kind support, said Doug Taylor of United Way Australia, which is running the Imagination Library locally. The books will cost \$6 per child a month, supported by local fundraising.

Parton said her father lived long enough to see the Imagination Library become a success.

"I did it in honour of my dad, she said. "To see it be over the whole world, I feel like my dad is smiling down on me."

MATTHEW WESTWOOD | The Australian | February 11, 2014 4:52PM

If you wish to donate to Dolly's Imagination Library, you can do so through their websites. There are websites for each of the countries in which the programme has been introduced. The more money raised in Australia the more books can be placed into the hands of young children. <http://imaginationlibrary.com/?gclid=Cl6E2NzSxrwCFc6Bfgode0wAjg>

John Denver Honored As Legacy Recordings' Artist Of The Month For December 2013

Two-time Grammy Award®-winning singer and songwriter celebrated in 2013 so far with all-star tribute album *The Music Is You: A Tribute to John Denver*, and innovative virtual concert presentation in many cities, "John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert"

NEW YORK, Dec. 3, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- [Legacy Recordings](#), the catalog division of [Sony Music Entertainment](#), commemorates the life and music of **John Denver** (1943-1997) on the occasion of his 70th birthday, and celebrates his memory as the label's Artist of the Month for December 2013. Fans will be urged to join the John Denver estate in celebrating his legacy by using the hashtag #RememberJohnDenver on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts so all messages can be collected in one place.

Fans are also being urged to tell "My John Denver Story" at mystory@johndenver.com, recalling when they first fell in love with the artist, or one of their favorite Denver songs or experiences, including concerts or personal meetings with him. Each week, one fan's memory will be shared with fans worldwide at

<http://myjohndenverstory.tumblr.com/>.

John Denver, who would have turned 70 on December 31, 2013, was a multi-faceted singer, songwriter, actor, environmental activist, philanthropist, and long-time RCA, Windstar and Sony Music recording artist. The beloved two-

time Grammy Award®-winning artist (and five-time host of the Grammy Awards® broadcast), was also honored as the Poet Laureate of Colorado.

Denver began his solo career when he was signed to RCA Victor in 1969. It was his 1967 tune, "Leaving, On A Jet Plane," that received notice, when Peter, Paul & Mary recorded it that year on their first 'folk-rock' LP, *Album 1700*. It became PP&M's one and only #1 hit. The song entered the Hot 100 on October 25, 1969, the same issue in which *Rhymes & Reasons* charted, Denver's RCA debut, containing his own version of the song.

John Denver emerged from the folk music movement of the 1960s to become one of the most celebrated entertainers of the '70s and '80s – with a string of nearly three dozen Billboard chart hits including the standards "Leaving On A Jet Plane," "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "Rocky Mountain High" (an official state song of Colorado), "Sunshine On My Shoulders," "Back Home Again," "Thank God I'm A Country Boy," "Annie's Song," "Calypso," and many others, a body of work that will continue to resonate for years to come.

Throughout his RCA recording career, Denver released some 22 studio, live and Christmas albums, averaging at least one release per year from 1969 until 1988, when he moved over to the Colorado-based Windstar Records. To date, Denver's catalog has sold over 33 million records including eight Billboard Top 10 Albums in the U.S. (three of which hit #1). These include seven RIAA multi-platinum, thirteen platinum and 20 gold album certifications.

A number of landmark events have already marked 2013 as John Denver's estate honors his memory and music during his 70th birthday year, including a tribute album released in April called, *The Music Is You: A Tribute to John Denver* (ATO Records), featuring a collection of his most popular songs as recorded by a diverse group of artists ranging from Dave Matthews, My Morning Jacket, and Train, to Lucinda Williams, Emmylou Harris, and many others. "John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert" visited several major cities, presenting an innovative virtual presentation in which for the first time in 15 years, Denver was seen performing on giant video screens, backed live by former members of his band, accompanied by a string section. The concert featured archival video footage of Denver performing hit songs spanning his career, along with stories of life on the road with the artist as told by old friends and fellow performers.

Legacy will continue its role as the steward of John Denver's enormous audio and video catalog, with special attention to two best-selling titles: [The Classic Christmas Album](#) (released 2012), a 16-song collection of favorite holiday tunes gathered



together from his long out-of-print albums, *Rocky Mountain Christmas* (1975) and *Christmas, Like A Lullaby* (1990); and [The Essential John Denver](#) (released 2007), the definitive two-CD retrospective, containing 36 singles and album tracks spanning his recording career on RCA and his own Windstar label from 1969 to 1995. His songs, wrote long time chronicler Barry Alfonso in his notes to [The Essential John Denver](#), "celebrated love without shame and encouraged millions to see the glories of the natural world with clearer eyes. The on-stage humbleness Denver was known for masked a resolute dedication to his craft and the courage of his convictions. His major-key life was one exceptionally well-lived, and we are all the better for it."

Aspen to celebrate John Denver's life

By **Michael McLaughlin**

Aspen Times POSTED: 10/11/2013 10:37:24 AM

MDT/UPDATED: 10/11/2013 11:48:45 PM MDT

ASPEN — Saturday marks the 16th anniversary of the day John Denver died when his experimental plane crashed into Monterey Bay in California.

Every year since his death, his life has been celebrated in his longtime home of Aspen, where friends, musicians and fans gather to remember his life, his music and his message.

It started with a handful of musicians who simply wanted to honor the singer-songwriter and play some of his music.

Now, it has grown into a week-long celebration with different events every day, including musical performances and group activities, as well as nightly sing-alongs at the Mountain Chalet, the unofficial headquarters of the event.

A handful of volunteers keep the remembrances running through social media and word-of-mouth. Hollie Carter, a central figure on the "Aspen in October" Facebook site, helps with several events for the celebration, including the horse-drawn hayride, where she makes sure at least one musician rides with every wagon. "If you get people to listen to his music, you don't have to explain the message. They just get it," she said.



Read more: [Aspen to celebrate John Denver's life - The Denver Post](#)

http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_24289737/john-denver-celebration-aspen-fills-week#ixzz2tCZsnCaV

STORIES FROM THE HEART:

'Don't just live, live well,' urges heart disease, stroke survivor

There have been two constant themes in Pete Huttlinger's life: music and heart disease. Born with a heart defect, Pete lacked the energy to keep up with kids his age. So when they would go out to a field to play, he would bring a guitar or a banjo. Within about 15 minutes, while the other kids were just breaking a sweat, he'd be off to the side, picking and grinning. "It was such a great source of enjoyment when I was watching them play football or just whenever I was alone," he said. He was 12 when he had his first open-heart surgery. Much to the annoyance of his nurses, he plucked a banjo while in his hospital bed. The procedure helped. By age 16, Pete was able to finally run an entire mile. *** Pete graduated from the prestigious Berklee College of Music and became a touring musician. He's been nominated for an Emmy award, played on Grammy-nominated projects and won the National Fingerstyle Guitar Championship in 2000. He toured with John Denver and LeAnn Rimes, and recorded a tribute album to Stevie Wonder. In July 2010, Pete received a pacemaker-defibrillator because of congestive heart failure. That November, Pete awoke one morning and was paralyzed on his right side. He was having a stroke. Through months of physical therapy, Pete relearned how to play guitar. Then came another brutal challenge – severe heart failure. "That was the tricky one," he said. Pete was flown from Nashville to Houston in April 2011. Days later, he received a type of heart pump called a left ventricular assist device (LVAD). It's a battery-



operated device that helps maintain the pumping ability of a heart that can't effectively work on its own. Another Nashville star, country singer Randy Travis, received a similar device in July. Now, Pete is healthy enough to resume his career and an active lifestyle. He walked a half-

marathon exactly one year to the day after his life-saving flight to Houston. He also recently released a new CD, "McGuire's Landing," which includes a 52-page story that he wrote. "I decided a long time ago, don't just live, live well," he said. - That's another thing Pete is known for – his positive outlook.

While hospitalized in Houston, Pete also developed intense passion for talking to others about living well. That led to his involvement with the American Heart Association/American Stroke



Association, the nation's oldest, largest voluntary organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Pete volunteers in his hometown of Nashville, occasionally performing at events. He continues to push others to push themselves. Founded in 1924, the American Heart Association has funded research by 13 Nobel Prize winners and has been part of advancements such as the first artificial heart valve, cholesterol-inhibiting drugs, heart transplantation, and CPR techniques and guidelines.

"Don't give up," Pete said. Are you sick? Get up and go for walk. Healthy? Go help someone else. Because when you're giving, you're living well." I wanted to share this letter that appeared in the Winfield December newsletter that I received this month. The newsletter highlights stories of this year's festival which took place in September, 2013 (from Kathy Lill)

A Letter from Pete Huttlinger

Dear Walnut Valley Festival attendees, performers and employees:

I want to take a moment and tell you all just how deeply you have touched Erin and me with your expressions of love and care when I was sick and when we returned to Winfield this year. When we arrived, after a four-year hiatus, we could not walk thirty feet without being stopped and told that you had prayed for me in my recovery from a severe stroke and end-stage heart failure. And with some 13,000 of you there this year, that was a lot of stopping! Please don't worry because we loved every minute of it.

We were both particularly moved at your remembrances of the impromptu benefit concert that took place for me in the middle of a big storm under the roof next to Stage II. You painted such a picture for us of a big, funny, wet, noisy, tearful, joyous occasion and I know we would have enjoyed being a part of it if it were at all possible. It's hard to accept help when you're down but we are blessed by each of you because when we needed you most, you were there for us.

I'm sure that many of you are aware that I have a rather happy-go-lucky attitude towards life, which I must say has been a blessing during the hard times I've experienced. (And there have been a lot more than just my health struggles.) But a good attitude alone is not enough to get any of us through this journey we are on. It takes a lot of love from those who are near to us. My wife, Erin, has been the best partner I could have imagined. She was there with me every day I was in the hospital in Houston – and that was a four-month stay! She saw me continually losing weight to the point where I reached a low of 110 pounds! And then she was with me when I took my first steps after lying down for two solid months. She walked with me every step when I celebrated a year of my

new life and walked a half marathon (13.1 miles!) one year to the day from when I was life-flighted from our home in Nashville, TN, to the Texas Heart Institute in Houston, TX. (including the day I broke my leg while we were training...but that's another story.)

But equally to her being by my side, I so appreciated all of your prayers, your letters, cards, gifts that you sent. You are the reason I chose to get back up and keep on moving. You are why I chose to learn to play the guitar again. You help me to remain a happy-go-lucky person who doesn't take himself too seriously but still takes time to appreciate each and every day.

Life is beautiful. Life is wonderful. Life is worth living.

Until next time

Don't Just Live, Live Well

You can see Pete:

March 7 – 8, 2014 Victoria, British Columbia

Oak Bay Beach Hotel, 1175 Beach Drive Victoria, BC V8S2N2 Canada

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

March 29, 2014 Roaring Brook Nature Centre

70 Gracey Road, Canton CT

<http://www.roaringbrookconcerts.org/>

Pianist Chris Nole remembers the masterful John Denver on his 70th birthday

December 31, 2013

<http://www.examiner.com/article/pianist-chris-nole-remembers-the-masterful-john-denver-on-his-70th-birthday>

Perhaps tough to fathom, but beloved two-time Grammy winner [John Denver](#) would be 70 years old had he lived. The radio friendly, environmentally conscious singer-songwriter possesses an impressive body of work. Fifteen Top 40 singles and nearly 40 studio and live albums have cemented his legacy as one of America's greatest artists. While he began strictly as a folk singer, Denver successfully incorporated pop, rock, country, and bluegrass into his musical arsenal

In an exclusive interview, [Chris Nole](#), Denver's final pianist, goes on the record about his days spent assimilating the subtle colors and dynamics of music from a genuine master of the art form. Nole joined Denver in January 1994, replacing noted Elvis Presley sideman Glen D. Hardin's vacated piano stool.

The jazz-influenced pianist remained a valuable asset to Denver's road and studio band until the songwriter's sudden death on Oct. 12, 1997, in a freak accident over the Pacific Ocean involving an incongruously placed fuel selector valve handle in his experimental two-seat airplane.

Soundly proving early detractors wrong who took absolute pleasure in criticizing Denver's gentle odes to nature, interest in the late songwriter



continues to accelerate. A new generation of artists, spearheaded by My Morning Jacket, Brandi Carlile and Dave Matthews, recently covered Denver's music on the well-received *Music Is You: A Tribute to John Denver*. Coming off a triumphant, albeit low key tour with Country Music Hall of Fame inductee [Don Williams](#), Nole has been quite busy in the past year, also finding the time to revisit his association with the "Take Me Home, Country Roads" balladeer on the [John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert](#) tour. The multimedia visual experience combines members of Denver's former band with archival video footage capturing Denver's vocals and acoustic guitar. So sit back for awhile and pull up a rocking chair as Nole, who has incidentally toured in modern times with Faith Hill, Shelby Lynne, the Oak Ridge Boys, and Emmylou Harris, reminisces about growing up in New Jersey during the mid-'70s, hearing the lilting "Annie's Song" radiate through AM radio, having a single rehearsal and then debuting in Detroit the next evening, Denver's homespun sense of humor, whether the singer had any pre-show superstitions, the significance of the platinum-selling *Wildlife Concert*, their final conversation, and much more.

The Chris Nole Interview.

Do you come from a musical family?

I've learned over the years that some of my family was and is indeed musical. One of my mom's cousins, Tony Costa (kinda my uncle), made a living in Las Vegas as an entertainer. Uncle Tony hung out in the Rat Pack crowd during the 60's up through the '80s. Very talented pianist, vocalist and all-around good guy.

I also learned my mom was an aspiring singer as a youth, but due to her strict family upbringing, she was not allowed to pursue that very far. As for our immediate household, all of us three boys were involved with music starting at a young age. My younger brother is a former drummer now mainly playing electric bass guitar. My older brother was a percussionist in high school.

How did you first become aware of John Denver?

I did both. I obviously wanted to learn John's music as a youngster via the sheet music. The seventies was a *great* time for all kinds of music. I was a huge fan of The Eagles, The Allman Brothers, Billy Preston, Lynyrd Skynyrd, [Elvis Presley](#), [The Beach Boys](#), and many, many more. I ventured into many musical directions at the time and still do. I spend a lot of time these days delving into blues, New Orleans piano, jazz and other styles. I feel all styles relate to each other in some way or the other.

I also have toured with and currently tour with some fabulous country acts here in Nashville. In 2013 I did over 70 live dates with the great Don Williams. I think the diversity keeps me well

rounded as a musician, writer, and music producer.

Where were you when you got the word that John was interested in you joining his band?

I was home in Nashville. I got a call from John Denver's tour manager and good friend, Kris O'Connor, who I befriended around a year beforehand. From previous conversations with "KO" I knew that there were possible changes on the horizon for John's band and that they were interested in giving me a try at the spot.

I was contacted sometime in 1993 about possibly filling in for John's pianist at the time, Glen D. Hardin [also a member of [Elvis Presley's famed TCB Band](#)]. Glen was having some serious back trouble then.

The sub date did not happen, but I did get to meet John around that time at the Opry House in Nashville at one of his shows. He thanked me for being willing and available to assist with the piano sub spot if necessary.

The official call and offer came in January 1994. Kris O'Connor talked to me then about signing on for an Asian tour and other dates with John during the year. Of course I took them up on their offer [laughs].

My first gig with John was on Feb. 23 at the Fox Theater in Detroit. Alan Deremo, who tours with us on the recent *John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert*, was not in the band when I joined. Jerry Scheff – best known as Elvis' bassist in the TCB Band – was still doing the bass gig. Alan came in maybe a year later.

Let's revisit your Feb. 23, 1994, debut at the Fox Theater. John remained in Detroit for five shows. Did you undergo an extensive rehearsal?

Not really; the first time we all got together was in a meeting room at our hotel in Detroit. After a casual rehearsal, we hit the stage. All other 'tightening up' was done at future sound checks – 5 p.m. every show day. John was very confident with his own stage presence and abilities, and he trusted his professional musicians to cover the rest.

My memories of that day are of trying to grasp all the details being thrown at me for the show – since I had no contact or advice from Glen D. – and basically just trying to fit in. I was mainly focused on learning and playing John's show the best that I could.

John didn't play any practical jokes but did many nice things to make us – guitarist Pete Huttlinger joined at the same time – feel welcome. We were treated first class all the way. Anyone whoever worked with John and his organization could attest to that. The band was always top consideration. Sorry to say, not so with many other acts.

Two things stick out from our first few shows to me – first, I was knocked out by John's



entertaining and vocal abilities – he was certainly one of the best, if not the best entertainer and vocalist I've ever worked with. I watched and listened to him perform many nights from 10 feet away and it was amazing.

The second thing that sticks out in my mind was my touch on the piano. At the time, I was used to playing with much louder, less dynamic bands. John's show was all finesse. I had to dramatically adjust my approach to playing the grand piano to fit in with John's delicate arrangements and vocals.

The dynamics and subtleties of John's music were much deeper than most any other act that I know of. Maybe the closest I've seen is with Don Williams. The performance on Don's stage is all based around the vocal as John's show was. Regardless, after a few nights in Detroit with John I believe I had it figured out.

What was an average sound check with John like?

John's sound checks were usually around 20 to 30 minutes long. He would call just about any song at a sound check. If he liked how it sounded, it would sometimes make the show that night but usually not as far as I can remember.

We would put the set list together usually at the piano after sound check. John had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to sing night to night.

Once in awhile there may have been a suggestion from the band, or most likely Kris O'Connor. John would listen to what anyone had to say.

When we would travel overseas the set lists would change more so than back in the states. John had so many special songs that he would do in others countries – songs where the lyric related to that country or people. When we were working on some of the more obscure material – we would spend more time at sound check.

Did John have any pre-show rituals or superstitions?

John usually got a massage prior to the show. He had a masseuse that accompanied him on tour. He usually ate a grilled fish dinner – or something else pretty healthy – right after the show

Were there any particular songs that John didn't like to perform live?

The only hit that sticks out in my mind that we rarely performed was "Thank God I'm a Country Boy." I remember that we did it once in the four years I was with him. I never asked him why – but if I had to guess, it may have been because we did not have a fiddle in the band at the time.

How advanced was John on piano?

John was a very basic pianist – he accompanied himself very well on a few of his own songs. It worked well for what the song called for. He would mainly play piano on his solo shows when his regular pianist was not there. He asked me once to show him the intro to John Lennon's "Imagine." That was cool.

The platinum-selling *Wildlife Concert* is an outstanding visual document of your time with John.

Released in June 1995, it is the most prominent recording project that we worked on together.

A&E and especially PBS have shown it numerous times.

The Wildlife Concert showed the world just how seasoned and still relevant John had become over the years. He had matured into an iconic American singer-songwriter and vocalist. John's music was being appreciated once again, and the special was the beginning of a comeback for him. John was very generous with his band on stage. Quite a few live shows that I played on were released after his death. I would recommend that you also listen to *The Harbor Lights Concert* [recorded on Nov. 9, 1995, in Boston] or his *Christmas in Concert* [Dec. 19-20, 1996, D.A.R. Constitutional Hall, Washington, D.C.] albums, respectively. These live shows give you a good sense of what we were doing.

Though not as widely known, we created a few studio projects together, including John's reimagining of his greatest hits in Sept. 1996 and his Grammy-winning final album, *All Aboard!*, both recorded in Nashville. The latter is still a personal favorite of mine

Did you have the opportunity to spend any holidays with John?

We did celebrate Thanksgiving together in 1994. The band and crew celebrated the holiday in Australia – probably in Newcastle – at a restaurant either in the hotel or nearby. We had a great time chowing down on a traditional American turkey dinner. If you have to be away from home and family on a holiday – that's the way to do it. I never got to spend Christmas or John's birthday with him as we never worked during the last couple of weeks of the year.

What are some of your special memories about visiting John's home in Aspen?

One of my fondest memories is when we caught some fresh trout up at his cabin at Woods Lake. John, with a little help from Kris O'Connor, cleaned and cooked all the fish and served them. He even did the dishes afterwards. What a guy.

What do you recall about your final conversation with John?

My last words to John were most likely on the side of the stage at the Jones Hall for the Performing Arts in Houston, Texas, on Sept. 28, 1997, prior to the show. John was usually not real talkative before his shows, since he was mentally preparing to give all he had to give that particular evening for the performance. Usually just a quick 'Hi' or 'Have a good show' kind of thing. As far as I can remember, our last show together seemed pretty much like most any other show that we performed together.



How would you describe John's sense of humor?

John was like most of the rest of us. We all have our up days and not so up days. When John was having a good day, he would be very jovial. He had a witty and clever sense of humor. He was very competitive with games and such. John's laughter – when he was really having a funny moment – was especially boisterous. He'd pretty much come to tears with laughter.

Looking back over the past 20 years, how did working with John impact your life?

I would have to say the biggest effect that John has had on my life is all the wonderful people I have met through his musical legacy. I am still involved with many shows that pay tribute to the man and his timeless music, including the multimedia *John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert*.

John changed my outlook on music – music has so many facets. John taught me more about the subtle colors and dynamics of music. I learned from a master.

DON'T GO ANYWHERE YET! *The Master of Telecaster, James Burton, first joined John Denver in October 1977 for the "I Want to Live" album sessions, ultimately forging a 20-year friendship with the late songwriter. Burton was also a valued lead guitarist for such legends as Elvis Presley, Rick Nelson, Jerry Lee Lewis, Emmylou Harris, Roy Orbison and Glen Campbell. In a case of slight irony, Burton has been an integral part of the bestselling Elvis: The Concert multimedia world tour for well over a decade. To read a comprehensive interview with Burton marking the anniversary of Nelson's untimely death ["Six String Brothers: James Burton Champions the Timeless Allure of Rick Nelson"], simply click on the highlighted link*

Officials consider 'Country Roads' as new state song

Resolution to honor John Denver tune calls it an 'apt poetic description' of WV

by Whitney Burdette, Daily Mail staff, Advertiser, Monday February 10, 2014

<http://www.charlestondaily.com/News/stateho use/201402090082>

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- "Almost Heaven" is not only one of West Virginia's slogans -- it also is the first line in what could become the state's fourth official state song.

A measure moving through the Legislature would make John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" an official state song. Delegate Marty Gearheart, R-Mercer, introduced the House Concurrent Resolution and said the tune shines a positive light on West Virginia, even in the midst of a water contamination crisis.

"All West Virginians know the song. People around the world know the song," Gearheart said.

"It just seems to be a simple positive for us to adopt that as one of our state songs."

The resolution passed the House Friday and is now before the Senate Government Organization Committee.

Denver, Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert wrote the song in 1970. Denver featured the song on his 1971 album "Poems, Prayers and Promises." It hit No. 2 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 chart that same year and eventually became one of Denver's most popular songs.

The lyrics "are an apt poetic description of our landscape and heritage," according to HCR 40, including mentions of the Shenandoah River and Blue Ridge Mountains. However, some like to point out those landmarks are only marginally associated with the far eastern part of West Virginia and more suitably describe western Virginia.

Michael Lipton, founder and director of the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame, said Danoff disclosed in an interview he thought he was in West Virginia when he wrote the lyrics but was actually on the wrong side of the river, in Virginia. However, Lipton concedes the song has become synonymous with West Virginia.

"I have one story and I know there are lots of stories like this," he said. "I was in a taxicab in Moscow and the driver said where are you from and I said United States. He said where and I said West Virginia. He started singing 'Country Roads.' My wife and I were in western China. We were at a wedding. There's a tradition where you get up and sing. We sang 'Country Roads' and people got up and sang. It was pretty crazy."

Although the song is associated with the world over with West Virginia, Lipton said Hazel Dicken's song, "West Virginia, My Home" should become the next official state song.

"It's not a pop song, but it's a very, very powerful song written by one of the West Virginia icons, both in music and women's rights, labor rights," Lipton said.

He's not the only one. Others in the music community agree "Country Roads" doesn't deserve to be a state song.

"It's an interesting question," he said. "They're only taking up 'Country Roads,' they're not taking up Hazel's song. It's not a choice between the two. There are a lot of people in the music community who feel the same way I do and beyond the music community. Hazel affected people all over the state, all over the world." Gearheart disagrees with Lipton's assessment of the song, saying it describes a person's journey home to West Virginia.

"There have been some objections from some of the language within the song that may not be a West Virginia reference," he said. "However, with some research, it actually is all West Virginia



reference. The song tells the story of one traveling home to West Virginia, east to west and entering our state and the things they see."

The song has not only become synonymous with the state, but also with the state's flagship university. West Virginia University has adopted the song, with the band performing the tune at every football pre-game show since 1972. Denver even performed the song in 1980 at the dedication of the new Mountaineer Field.

Tara Curtis with the WVU Alumni Association said even if the song isn't really about West Virginia, it has a way of connecting current students and graduates, no matter where they're from originally. "I think alums look at 'Country Roads' with a great sense of pride," she said. "It's something that connects us all and it doesn't matter where you're from. Even students who come here from out of state or didn't live here originally, that song just takes on a very, very special meaning."

Curtis wrote a blog post in 2008 for the Alumni Association's website, recounting her own experiences with the song - from a Dell computer technician in India singing a few chords when she told him she was from West Virginia to a man from Brazil whose father was a Denver fan, Curtis said the song transcends geographic location.

In her post, she asked readers to recount some of their own experiences with "Country Roads." More than 175 people responded.

"My husband and I have attended several WVU weddings over the course of the years and every one ends the night with 'Country Roads'," said Sarah Sperry of Pittsburgh.

"At our wedding in 2007, we failed to check with the DJ ahead of time to see if he had the song. When the end of the night came and the music ended, our Mountaineer friends spontaneously sprung into 'Almost Heaven, West Virginia.' The entire song was sung without any background music as the group swayed in a circle with their arms around each other. It's one of my most favorite memories of our wedding."

Marshall University also uses the song to promote the school. Matt Turner, Marshall's chief of staff, said fans, not WVU, asked Marshall to not play the song before football games, though Marshall's marching band has not stopped playing the song altogether.

"I think almost all West Virginians love the song," Turner said. "For years, it's been an unofficial state song. Our fans love it, too. In fact, we use it in our marketing efforts for international students."

"They identify Marshall as the state of West Virginia and the song very much depicts a positive and very warm image of the entire state. It's probably one of the world's most recognizable modern tunes and it helps promote all of our state to the world."

The song has been covered by other country, pop and even foreign-language artists. But no matter

who sings it, the song continues to pull at the heartstrings of West Virginians.

"It brings a tear to your eye when you hear it," Lipton said.

Jim Curry Tribute Shows - February

Here are Jim and Anne's concerts for the next couple of months. Check their website regularly to see if they are soon to appear near you.

<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/> Click CTRL+the link to open the site for ticket information. If you

cannot get the link to open the site, click this one:

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

February 9 - Altadena, CA – Matinee

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 9 - Altadena, CA - Evening Show

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 13 - Green Valley, AZ

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 14 - Gilbert, AZ

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 15 - Canyon Lake, CA

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 16 - Upland, CA

[Click Here for More Info](#)

February 22 - Hemet, CA

[Click Here for More Info](#)

MARCH 2014:

March 5 - Dade City, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 9 - Lecanto, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 10 - Punta Gorda, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 14 - Dallas, TX Symphony w/guest Steve Weisberg

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 15 - Dallas, TX Symphony w/guest Steve Weisberg

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 16 - Leesburg, FL - Need Complete information on website

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 17 - Fort Myers, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 18 - Daytona Beach, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

March 20 - Largo, FL

[Click Here for More Info](#)

There are more dates on the website!

Anne's blog is also a delight to read. If you want to keep up with the Curry's, click this link;

<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/appearing-on-television-isnt-as-easy-as-it-looks/>

John Adams – forthcoming shows

Friday, March 7, 2014

7:00 PM

Mile Hi Church

9077 West Alameda Avenue

Lakewood, Colorado 80226

With the Lakewood Symphony Orchestra



After a very successful performance at the **Mile Hi Church in 2012**, the John Adams Band and the Lakewood Symphony Orchestra, will return to this most wonderful 1500 seat Auditorium. Once again they will prove that John Denver's music and a classical orchestra go very well together. We are looking forward to greeting many of you and joining us at this spectacular concert.....

Reserved Seating \$30.00 Premium - \$20.00 Standard

On-Line: <http://www.milehichurch.org/events-speakers>

Doors Open at 6:00PM

Friday, April 25, 2014 at 7:00 PM

Legacy High School Auditorium

2701 West 136th Avenue

Broomfield, CO 80023

Malaria claims a life every 60 seconds. Millions of lives needlessly lost each year. Together with partners like; *World Health Organization, United Nations Foundation, the Red Cross, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* and *Global Fund to Fight AIDS*, the *United Methodist Church* has pledged to raise \$75,000,000 world wide, of which \$60,000,000 already has been raised.

The Rocky Mountain Conference (156 churches) has raised already more than \$700,000 of their \$1.2 million dollar goal, which means saving 120,000 lives.

The JOHN ADAMS BAND will perform a concert titled: *"When Every Minute Counts"* to help raise money for this purpose and is working together with the Good Shephard UMC in Thornton, CO. More details and how to order tickets will follow soon. <http://www.imaginenomalaria.org/> to be redirected to the web site.

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

They also are planning a return to the Mishler Theatre in Altoona on **April 5, 2014**, and more concerts to be announced in the coming weeks! Please visit us at www.bouldercanyonband.com for all the updates.

Remember The Miners Announces "Take Me Home, Country Roads" Songwriter to Attend Bob Huggins Fish Fry

Two-Time Grammy Award Winner Bill Danoff, Son Owen, to Attend Signature Charity Event
<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/01/prweb11531788.htm>

There was nothing like singing 'Take Me Home, Country Roads' in Madison Square Garden. It's a great honor to have Bill join us, and I'm deeply honored he accepted our invitation.

Morgantown, WV (PRWEB) January 28, 2014 Bill Danoff, the two-time Grammy award winning songwriter of "Take Me Home Country Roads," most famously recorded by John Denver, will attend the Bob Huggins Fish Fry Presented by Little General Stores on January 31st at the Hazel

& J.W. Ruby Event Center at Morgantown's Mylan Park. Danoff and his son, musician Owen Danoff, will perform "Take Me Home Country Roads," which Danoff first performed in West Virginia on September 6, 1980, when he sang alongside John Denver at the opening of Mountaineer Field.

Danoff, an Honored Songwriter in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, will receive the Remember The Miners West Virginia Legacy Award from WVU Head Men's Basketball Coach Bob Huggins and a proclamation honoring Danoff on behalf of the state of West Virginia from Secretary of State Natalie E. Tennant.

"We're very excited to welcome Mr. Danoff to my annual Fish Fry. Supporting our efforts on behalf of miners' families and for cancer research, it's sure to be a special night with the writer of a song that has come to mean so much to West Virginia," said Bob Huggins, "I've said many times after winning the Big East Tournament, there was nothing like singing 'Take Me Home, Country Roads' in Madison Square Garden. It's a great honor to have Bill join us, and I'm deeply honored he accepted our invitation."

"Being a Georgetown grad and a Hoyas fan, even I agree that hearing 'Take Me Home Country Roads' at the Big East Tournament was a thrill. I'm looking forward to singing it for you all," said Danoff.

Danoff won a Grammy for Best New Artist with the Starland Vocal Band and another Grammy for Best Song-Vocal Arrangement for the top song of 1976, "Afternoon Delight."

Now in its third year, the Bob Huggins Fish Fry supports Remember The Miners and its flagship Scholars Program and the Norma Mae Huggins Cancer Research Endowment Fund at WVU's Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center.

To purchase tickets, visit

<http://www.eventfarm.com/BobHugginsFishFry>

FaceBook

A new concept has been introduced to Facebook recently. It is a JD fan magazine. Please join in the fun and read the regular posts.

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

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 World Game

*I want to play in the World Game
I want to make it better than it's ever been before
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make sure everybody knows the score
About using less, doing so much more*

*Everywhere I'm going, I see trouble
Everywhere I'm looking, I see all kinds of pain
Maybe we can get back on the double
Maybe we can turn around and make it all change
They say it's you against your neighbor
If it gets right down to it, you against your friend
I swear that this is not the answer
As far as I can see it is the way it all ends
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make it better than it's ever been before
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make sure everybody knows the score
About using less and doing so much more*

*Hey man, you know me, I don't worry
Hey man, you know me, I am never afraid
Only one thing can make me sorry
Something to say and then it never gets said
What kind of man turns on his brother
What kind of man would turn his back on a friend
Who has the right to say it's over, its over
Who has the right to see how far it can bend
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make it better than it's ever been before
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make sure everybody knows the score
About using less, doing so much more*

*Yaweh, Yaweh, Yaweh Jah Yaweh, Yaweh, Yaweh Jah
Yaweh, Yaweh, Yaweh Jah Yaweh, Yaweh, Yaweh Jah
You and me, you and me, you and me, you and me
I and I, I and I, I and I, I and I
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make it better than its ever been before
I want to play in the World Game
I want to make sure everybody knows the score
About using less, doing so much more, do it*

