

Contact Details:

Janette Frawley
PO Box 8155
Camberwell North VIC 3124
Australia
higherground_australia@yahoo.com.au



www.highergroundaustralia.com/

Volume 12 – Edition 3

HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – May 2015

Welcome

Welcome to our May newsletter. After almost 18 years, I marvel that there is so much news out there in the world that is John Denver-related, but the fantastic part of this, is that each and every time I sit down to put the newsletter together, something new is published. This month is no exception and we have lot of news to share with you.

PRAYERS PLEASE

James Burton's son, Jeffrey is still seriously ill and in hospital. Your continued prayers would be appreciated by the family.

2015 JD Tribute Weekend

Our 2015 JD weekend will be held in New South Wales (near Newcastle) on the weekend of 9-11 October. When we were in Cessnock for Alistair's 70th birthday, we took the opportunity to visit the Kurri Kurri campus of the Hunter TAFE, where they have a lovely setting, suitable for our needs. There are a number of 'houses', each of varying sizes and facilities. The larger one, which we went through and had a look at (albeit through the back door), is perfect for our requirements.

We have booked it.

Here is what Carmel has said about it;

The cottages are situated in the first part of the Tafe and are private so there would be no noise problem. The caretaker has a house there but Desley said he would probably join in with us. We are able to take motorhome and caravans in but we would have to park on the road.

The cabins are in our rating about 3 and half star rating but they have the > basics we need for the weekend. One in the middle would be the meeting area as it was bigger and they are prepared to bring in extra chairs tables etc to make us comfortable. The bathrooms are wonderful, they have been recently renovated. Two showers and 2 toilets.

Bedrooms are comfortable, clean, innerspring mattress, so no falling through Laraine. he linen is provided.

I think this is ok for our weekend IF you are not expecting 5star for your money. It is clean and there is plenty of room at the back of the cottages for sitting in the sun etc. It would work out an inexpensive weekend for all of us.

The cost per cottage (sleeps 7) will be \$560 for the weekend (\$280 per night), and there is a smaller cottage that sleeps 4 is \$480 for the weekend (\$240 per night).

Although the caretaker has not asked for a deposit, we need to know how many people will be attending this year. A \$40 deposit will be required from you. The \$40 is the food kitty for the weekend and the remainder will be due to be paid for the accommodation on the weekend.

Please pay your deposit to:

BSB: 733-039

ACC: 542649

Name: Mrs Janette Frawley
 (Westpac bank).

For any questions about the accommodation, please email me.

Rick Price – The John Denver Story

Don't forget to buy your tickets for 'The John Denver Story' starring Rick Price and the Colorado Quartet.



Rick will be appearing in Melbourne on 9th June, Hopefully I will see some of you there!

For those who love Rick Price, please check the local press for dates of his performances (not the John Denver Story) around town.

John Denver Statue Finds New Home at Red Rocks

June 3, 2015 – Aspen Times – Scott Condon
 John Denver's statue will soon have sunshine on its shoulders again.

The statue, "Spirit," has been in storage since it was removed from the former Windstar property in Old Snowmass in September 2013. The 1,500-pound statue was donated to the Colorado Music Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame is close to completing its relocation from the First Bank Center in Broomfield to Red Rocks Amphitheater in Morrison. "Spirit" will be placed outside the Trading Post, where the hall is setting up shop. "It is kind of a dream to know he's in a safe place and people from all over the world will be able to enjoy such an icon," said Karman Dopslaff, a member of a committee that was formed to decide how to handle the former Windstar Foundation's

assets, including the statue. Windstar was a think tank and activism organization founded by Denver. Windstar was dissolved in 2012.

Denver was an immensely popular singer and songwriter who was one of the most popular performers of the 1970s. He was known around Aspen for his environmental activism and humanitarianism.

He died Oct. 12, 1997, when his experimental aircraft crashed in California. Windstar, which was already struggling, languished without his leadership.

The "Spirit" statue features Denver wearing a protective glove and sleeve with his arm outstretched as an eagle prepares to land. A guitar is strapped to Denver's back. The bronze statue stands more than 15 feet tall. It was erected at Windstar in 2002 but had to be removed when the property was sold.

Dopslaff said Red Rocks is the perfect place for "Spirit" to land. The venue was Denver's favorite. He once said he wished he could perform concerts only there and have fans flown in from around the world, according to Dopslaff.

"Once I knew he said that, I was driven to get him to Red Rocks," she said.

Denver also was the first inductee when the Hall of Fame opened in April 2011. His song, "Rocky Mountain High," is Colorado's official state song. G. Brown, director of the Colorado Music Hall of Fame, said the foundation for the statue has been poured. It will be moved into place Thursday and polished Friday. There is no ceremony planned yet for the unveiling of the statue because considerably more work must be performed, he said. Stonework must be laid at the base and a plaque must be erected.

Brown said he wishes that John Denver fans would remain patient until all the work is finished, but signs indicate many of them will show up at Red Rocks this weekend.

News of the statue going up has already spread on Facebook. Fan Christine Moon posted an update about the statue status by Jennifer Moore on the Friends of John Denver public group Facebook page Tuesday. Moore wrote she is "SO excited" about the statue going up and that the huge rocks of the amphitheater will be visible behind the statue.

"This is really going to be a great place for Spirit to live," Moore wrote in a lengthy post. "Once again, John will be able to: 'sing to the skies ... the Rockies are living, they will never die.'"

Forty-two fans added comments onto Moon's post with Moore's comments. "I an (sic) looking forward to seeing it back up. My whold (sic) body has chills just thinking about this. (Love symbol) Really missed seeing him last year for sure," wrote Mary Ann Saur.

Saur and fans similar to her won't have to wait much longer. Brown said a contractor has the

equipment ready to move John Denver to his new home.

scondon@aspentimes.com

John Denver Statue Successfully Placed

June 6, 2015 – Aspen Times

The John Denver "Spirit" statue was successfully placed at its new home at Red Rocks Amphitheater on Thursday, but other preparations were delayed by rainy weather Friday.

The statue, 15 feet tall and weighing 1,500 pounds, was placed outside the Trading Post, the new home for the Colorado Music Hall of Fame. It will take about a week to complete the stonework around the base, put in a plaque and undertake other tasks, said Colorado Music Hall of Fame Director G. Brown.

"We were going to have the statue polished (Friday), but it's a downpour in the foothills," he said.

"Spirit" has already been a hit with Denver loyalists, Brown said. Many fans have already made the pilgrimage to Red Rocks to see the statue even though all the work isn't complete, he said.

The statue was [erected at the Windstar property](#) in Old Snowmass in 2002. The property was sold and "Spirit" was removed in September 2013. The statue was donated to the Colorado Music Hall of Fame and put into storage. The hall moved from Broomfield to Red Rocks this spring, so the statue was reinstalled.

Denver was the first inductee to the hall of fame, which features a big display on the popular singer-songwriter.

The Windstar Foundation was founded by Denver. The nonprofit pursued environmental and humanitarian causes. It languished after he died in 1997 and was dissolved in 2012.

From Karen Larson (Facebook)

I want to give everyone an update on "Spirit". I

went to Red Rocks on Thursday morning. They are working on the base where Spirit will be placed. The spot chosen is on the right side of the Trading Post. You can see the Amphitheater behind it. A great location. I got to see a diagram of what they are constructing to place Spirit on. It is going to be square in shape instead of round like at Windstar. I went into the Trading Post and they have a display up in the center of the main room. It is covered right now. The room off to the left will be the JD room. Nothing has been put up quite yet. They don't have a set date yet for the ceremony. But they are looking at on or around June 7th. When that date is chosen they will have

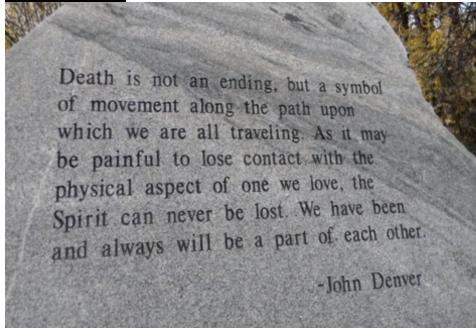


an announcement in the newspaper. One of the channels that will mention the ceremony is the local Fox channel. The opening of the museum and unveiling of Spirit will both happen together. Everything that is displayed in the Trading Post is temporary. They will be tearing down a storage building to the left of the Trading Post and constructing the CMHOF building there. It will take about 3 years to do that. A lady who works there told me they will be keeping watch over "Spirit" so that nothing happens to it. If I have time I will try and get up to Red Rocks again to see how things are progressing. I will keep you all updated. Can't wait for the day when we all can see Spirit again.

Steve Weisberg – one year on

In memory of Steve's first anniversary on the 22nd May, I would like to share with you Deb Valentino Arment's beautiful tribute. Printed with Permission from Deb Valentino.

Talk About Opening Doors: A Tribute to Steve Weisberg



Steve Weisberg

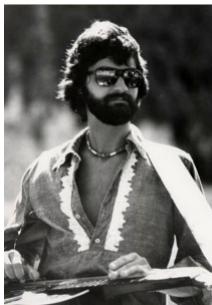
November 14, 1949 – May 22, 2014

John Denver fans from all over the world, affectionately known by many as the "John Denver Family" grieve today the passing Thursday evening of John's lead guitarist from the 1970s, Steve Weisberg. Steve was diagnosed in March 2013 with a lymphatic cancer he thought he'd beat.

For eighteen months, Steve rode the oscillating wave of cancer treatment, even while traveling to play in concerts across the country, most recently in Florida, Milwaukee, and Texas. He had another concert scheduled just ahead, in early June. Steve, lovingly known as "Pokey" to his friends in the music industry (for having shown up late one time to a recording session), was otherwise generous of time and spirit, a passionate man with a tender heart. You might

say he died as he lived, playing his famed guitar and expressing to the untimely end both love and gratitude for his friends, his life and talent, and all his many blessings.

Steve Weisberg, a boy with big dreams in the



experimental decade of the musical '70s, was a man who, in the end, seemed to have his head screwed on straight. He not only didn't take himself too seriously, he found humor in most situations and he laughed readily and heartily.

His laughter was so infectious that whenever he laughed, you laughed, whether or not it was as funny as Steve seemed to find it. Never oblivious to the ironic or to the facetious, his trademark saying—also attached in his email signature—was Steven Covey's, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."

A liberal arts major in college and an accomplished songwriter in his own right, Pokey loved a good story, and he created them regularly, both out of ordinary experience and out of the extraordinary. He was in every way a lively and natural communicator, never hesitant to pick up the phone and call friends to share an idea or just connect. Like his famed boss and band mate John Denver, Pokey was truly a people person, "invested in the human race." He made himself accessible to everyone he met and cared for—and if he met you, he generally cared for you. So friendly was he that he even included a direct telephone number on his website. In his way, he was a regular sort of guy, and in including the telephone number he likely figured, "How else are they going to find me?"

He frequently helped up-and-coming musicians by encouraging them, and even by playing with them in gigs and informal jams wherever life brought him. It was in this way that he came to know personally many John Denver enthusiasts, who now remain "family" 17 years after Denver's fatal plane crash in Monterey Bay, California.

About his condition, in a public Facebook post in May 2013, Weisberg wrote:

When I was referred to the oncologist 2 months ago I was ready for the worst. But what he told me was too good to be true: That my type is now so utterly and completely curable, I have a 98% chance of it being gone forever by July. This is not remission, which expects a return visit. This is... 'gone forever after round one of chemo'. I'm now halfway through a very easy, uneventful treatment program. He said my optimism would let me handle this little ordeal much better than another person might. The optimism came from being 24 years in recovery, which led me to God. And getting to know God led me to the actual belief that everything (everything) will always, somehow, be okay.

They say we're only as sick as our deepest secret, and I do believe this. This illness has brought me closer to God than anything I could have imagined. But trying to hide such a big secret has distanced me...from God, and from those who would help me celebrate the fact that I was spared the expected rigors and outcome of other forms of lymphoma. Mine is called Diffuse



Large B-Cell lymphoma. It's a laydown pussycat for today's sophisticated chemos, unless it's spread to the brain, or detected too late. Medical science has deduced that I do have a brain; that it is cancer-free; and that we detected this in time. The new look I'm sporting, as many of you guessed...was not optional.

Those of us in any type of 12 Step program know our illness became our greatest asset....once we had a little recovery under our belts. Life is sweeter than before that problem existed.

Recovery from cancer is an even bigger cause, for me, of celebration. I wish all others with the disease could be so lucky. Bizarre as it sounds, I have never had a more joyous experience being alive....than right now.

Photos and tributes to Steve are being shared in abundance today on social media, as fellow musicians, friends and family express their shock at his passing and their gratitude for his many contributions. In a correspondence with Shawn Garvey, Weisberg's friend and a minister by trade, who recently performed in concert with Steve in February, he muses, "Pokey and I had a special friendship based upon things that ran very deep within us, and I'm profoundly blessed that was where our friendship resided."

In his Facebook tribute, Pastor Garvey goes on to say:

By virtue of the kind of chemistry we had, and my vocation (I'm an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ), our friendship very quickly developed around matters of profound depth. Steve was a man on a journey, and he felt comfortable enough with me to share a very personal, spiritual side of himself that led us down all sorts of conversational pathways. I met him at a point in his life when he was re-discovering his love and spiritual connection with music—especially John's; and he's the first to admit that at the time it was all happening with John, he was too young to truly appreciate what that music was doing for people. In the time that I was blessed to know him, he got it.

He not only got it, he was profoundly appreciative for the genuine and miraculous gift that it was; to the millions it reached and to himself. He began to find more avenues and opportunities to share in his gift, and by the last few years he'd been able to do what we talked about at length for such a long time: go back to playing music full time as his vocation. I was so incredibly happy for him that he'd achieved that after such a long and complicated road since his days with John.

Garvey concludes:

I think what I'd share for those of you who primarily connected with Steve through the music was that he'd come to a very deep understanding of how the music touched all of you, and how there was great power, healing, joy and transformation inherent in that. John's music and

John's personality continues to do that for people, and Steve came to a very special understanding not only of that reality, but that he played a part in it and continued to do so these last few years. This was something he regarded as a magnificent blessing.

He'd want all of you to know that – and that it meant the world to him.

In the video that follows below (linked "Sunshine on My Shoulders"), we find the two friends sharing in sync a song written by the beloved John Denver, whose music brought them together five years ago when Garvey reached out to Weisberg in a fashion similar to that which, many years before, [Weisberg reached out to Denver](#). In both instances, Denver received Weisberg's enthusiasm and talent as Weisberg received Garvey's...and ([to echo another famous John Denver song](#)) this reception opened doors for both musicians.

Filmed in 2011 at Stanley Congregational Church in Chatham, NJ, it is also apparent in this video clip that Weisberg himself was inherently touched by the music he made (see link below). In this example of one of Steve's many musical encounters, this time with a fan who became his friend and spiritual confidant, we see clearly that Weisberg himself exuded the musical element.

With Garvey on vocals and Weisberg on lead, we see Weisberg "in the groove" he often referenced.

As he plays, we observe the guitar riff resonating in his body—so much so, that his fingerpicking becomes not just an accompaniment to the song, but seemingly a dance his body cannot contain. A beautiful dance of joy, a celebration. We witness firsthand the music that lived gloriously in the man we now grieve.

[Shawn Garvey and Steve Weisberg perform "Sunshine On My Shoulders"](#)



John Denver – Country Boy

June 3, 2015

At the peak of his fame in the 1970s, John Denver was the most popular singer in America. He performed at sold-out concerts, his albums sold more than 100 million copies, his TV specials got top ratings, and he was named poet laureate of his adopted Colorado.



Yet this man, who brought happiness to millions, was filled with insecurity, suffered from depression, and was savaged by the music critics. Exploring Denver's private life and public legacy, this intimate profile includes exclusive accounts from those closest to him, including former wives and managers, his son and brother, the musicians who toured with him for decades and the friends who knew the real John Denver.

On the face of it, John Denver was a wholesome country singer who penned pleasant songs with lyrics that some ridiculed for their simplicity. There were extremes to Denver's character – from the incredible highs reflected in his music to the more private lows with which he grappled. He loved touring and could not live without an audience, yet dreamed of the perfect home and family life. He may have written one of the greatest love songs about his first wife Annie, but she filed for divorce on their 15th wedding anniversary.

The BBC actually gave Denver his first television break with a primetime six-part series in 1973. In Britain, he learned to feel at home in front of a camera and his music took off. It became the soundtrack of a generation, when ideals of the 'good life' and living off the land spurred families to move to the countryside. To his British fans and millions of others around the world, the appeal of his music was its accessibility, but critics dismissed him.

In this new documentary, viewers re-discover a lost musical icon of the 70s and the enduring power of his music.

Participants featured in the program include:

- Annie Denver – John's first wife.
- Zak Deutschendorf – John's son.
- Cassandra Delaney Denver – John's second wife; they divorced in the early 90s.
- Jerry Weintraub – The movie mogul was a close friend and Denver's manager from 1970 to 1984.
- Ron Deutschendorf – John's younger brother, who was drafted to Vietnam as John sang protest songs at a peace rally in Washington.
- Tom Crum – close friend and co-founder of Windstar Foundation.
- Jean Michel Cousteau – friend and son of one of John's eco-heroes, Jacques Cousteau.
- James Burton – musician who toured with John and had also played with Elvis.
- Hal Thau – Denver's long-term finance manager.
- Connie Reeder – longtime friend.
- Milt Okun – renowned producer who gave John his first break when he auditioned as Chad Mitchell's replacement in the Chad Mitchell Trio.
- Mike Kobluk – sang with John in the Mitchell Trio.
- Paul Prestopino – musician in the Mitchell Trio.
- Taffy Nivert – co-wrote "Country Roads" with John and her husband Bill Danoff.

- Peter Yarrow – member of the trio Peter, Paul and Mary who had enormous success with John's song "Leaving on a Jet Plane."
- Stanley Dorfman – produced the John Denver BBC 1973 series.
- G. Brown – Colorado music journalist.

About South Dakota Public Broadcasting

South Dakota Public Broadcasting is a statewide multi-media network offering quality entertainment and lifelong learning via Television, Radio, Internet and Education & Outreach. For information about SDPB and the Friends of SDPB, go to SDPB.org or call 800-456-0766.
<http://www.sdpb.org/blogs/arts-and-culture/john-denver-country-boy/>

Denverdag – Apeldoorn, The Netherlands

For our European friends, The John Denver Project Band (from Italy) will be playing live at the Denverdag 'Jubilee of the World of John Denver (40 years)' on Sunday 31 May, 2015. Willie Hoevers will be attending this for the first time. Willie –

; <http://allevents.in/apeldoorn/jdpb-at-the-denverdag-jubilee-of-the-world-of-john-denver-40-years/763944853725854>

Engravings from Thoreau, Local Students set for Boulders in John Denver Sanctuary

by **Chad Abraham**, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer
Wednesday, April 29, 2015

The words of everyone from Henry David Thoreau and Woody Creek author Joe Henry to Aspen Elementary students will soon be engraved onto boulders in the John Denver Sanctuary. On Monday, Steve Cronin, a landscape designer with the city of Aspen's parks department, placed paper with quotes on several rocks to check sizing and approximate appearance. The parameters for 12 quotes selected by Annie Denver, the late musician's widow, and the parks department will then be sent to the Grand Junction company that previously etched words from Denver and others in several granite boulders, Cronin said.

"From the beginning [Annie Denver] wanted to share John's legacy and his spirit," he said of the park.

The initial engravings "attracted a ton of attention, and Annie and everyone really enjoyed it," Cronin said.

Some of the quotes provided inspiration to John Denver, while others are from people who knew him, like Henry. He wrote the words to, among others, the Denver song, "Rain Song," the lyrics of which were engraved when the sanctuary debuted in the early 2000s.

A Thoreau quote Cronin was measuring in the sanctuary's Child's Play area says: "Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain."



Other quotes being considered come from the likes of John Muir, Jacques Cousteau, Buckminster Fuller and Aldo Leopold. An Aspen Elementary teacher last year assigned her students to create their own poems and thoughts about nature – without telling them their words may be around for generations, Cronin said. "She gave them to us, and a lot of them are amazing," he said.

In September, parks director Jeff Woods, Denver and Cronin strolled through the area, appraising possible sites for the words. The John Denver Aspenglow Fund is paying for the effort, Cronin said. The work by Carlson Memorials, a company that also engraves tombstones, benches and the like, is set for June. Cronin said it should only take a day or two to complete.

Inscription of some of the quotes will have to wait until next fall, when a city construction project on the west side of Rio Grande Park is expected to be completed.

Monday, Cronin laid the paper out on boulders, looking for indentations that could be problematic, and photographed them for further scrutiny. A few revisions to the draft mark-ups were necessary so the words will fit better on the rocks, he said.

Carlson Memorials will make its own templates so parks staff can further visualize the quotes.

"We just want to complete it and do it right," Cronin said.

chad@aspendifailynews.com



Chad Abraham/Aspen Daily News

Steve Cronin of the city parks departments looks at a potential site for a new quote to be engraved in a rock at the John Denver Sanctuary on Monday

The Creation Spirituality of John Denver

Todd F Eklof – January 2005

This is an interesting article, but lengthy. Please follow the link to read online.

http://www.toddeklof.info/Todd_F_Eklof/John_Denver.html

TRICKSTER JOHN DENVER

Conrad Reeder

While driving south to Miami after spending time at a SYDA Foundation meditation retreat in upstate New York, I found myself somewhere on I-95 on a dark, cloudy September morning in 2000. About half-way through the Carolinas, I'd

played out all the CD's brought along for the trip, and let the radio scan through the local stations, spitting out music and words between white noise. This retreat I'd been at was also a favorite of my friend, John Denver, whom I sang and traveled with for over seventeen years.

John and his music were not on my radar growing up. Rock and roll mixed in with The Beatles was what I droned into my head. My Ohio click of goofy teenagers made fun of *Take Me Home Country Roads*, associating West Virginia with rednecks carousing in rusty pick-up trucks. John's image had always conjured up a dorky guy with simpleton songs for a simpleton audience. Even later, I reluctantly told my friends, especially jazz musicians, about my gig with John, just to avoid the snickers. But John, tall, handsome, and not dorky, soon won me over, not necessarily for his music, but for his truth, his sincerity, and for his genuine affection for people and nature.

Before John's tour, the largest audience I'd performed in front of topped maybe ten thousand. Millions filled John Denver concerts for decades. Sometimes from the stage I'd look out over a sea of people. His *simple* songs struck a chord for millions of fans that still cherish him years after his death. They were way ahead of me.

Losing my mom and John a month later in 1997, then my father in 1999, had tested me in ways known only to people who experience a tremendous loss, which probably includes everyone walking around on planet Earth, but being at the retreat had reminded me of fond memories about John, and the love for all things seen and unseen that we shared. Abruptly, I stopped the scanning radio when I heard John's very familiar, very clear, tenor voice singing, "Sunshine, on my shoulder makes me happy. Sunshine, in my eyes can make me cry."*

Synchronicity?

Through streaming tears I sang lyrics with this forever-disembodied voice on the radio—a song I'd sung hundreds of times with this voice at hundreds of venues in front of millions of people. "Sunshine on the water looks so lovely." Then it happened; a narrow beam of light pierced through the lugubrious wall of clouds, and tapped my left shoulder. Synchronicity.

On this lonely stretch of southbound I-95, a narrow strip of sunlight seemingly dissolved my sorrow, my bitter angst, and several destructive thoughts. In the space of three chords, I intuited volumes about myself, about music, about life's complexities, about the singular simplicity of love and John, who knew his audience well—the audience I was singing to at that moment—me. Trickster John. "Sunshine almost always makes me high," and it did at that moment, and it still does...almost always.

Sunshine On My Shoulders—written by John Denver, Mike Taylor & Dick Kniss



<https://medium.com/@conireeder/trickster-john-denver-580c3799e858>

John's Unsung Song

Frank W Martin, Feb 26 1979 People

Come let me love you
Let me give my life to you
Let me drown in your laughter
Let me die in your arms...

—Annie's Song

It may be the most celebrated love ballad John Denver ever wrote and still wafts out at an occasional flower-child wedding. But what jolted Denver into creating Annie's Song back in 1975 were the aftershocks of the near breakup of his own celebrated marriage to the lady of the title, Ann Martell Denver.

Admittedly "insecure" and overwhelmed by John's staggering success during their "tough" early years together, Annie, as well as John, had withdrawn into "noncommunication." Finally they actually separated, and a confused Denver fled their Aspen aerie for Switzerland. "It was only six days, but felt like three months," Annie recalls now. "I would get up at 4 a.m. and start crying and continue until I went to sleep that night." The crisis didn't end until a tearful long-distance call helped Annie "really get clear that I loved him totally. What it came down to is that love is unconditional. We've had some bad times, but now we keep talking."

That reconciliation, and rethinking, preserved a union that's now lasted 11 tumultuous years. John, after all, was an obscure folkie with the Chad Mitchell Trio when he met Annie. Then stardom hit like an avalanche, as he sold more than 100 million records, became a movie actor (in 1977's *Oh, God!*) and TV fixture (hosting last week's Grammys, for example, and headlining his own special next month). Annie, now 32 to his 35, sat home worrying, "How am I going to compete with this? It was very threatening for me," she notes. "I didn't know who I was. I didn't have an identity."

John's absences didn't make it easier. Even though he writes about home and hearth, Annie tends them—seldom leaving the Aspen he so lovingly limns in song. Characteristically, she turned down even the trip to Washington, D.C. with John when he represented American pop music at last month's hoopla for Chinese Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-ping. Teng was so touched by John's rendition of *Take Me Home, Country Roads* and by his halting Chinese phrases (Denver was the only entertainer on the program who even tried) that 110 copies of the new LP John Denver were dispatched to the departing visitors. ("Now we've got 900 million new potential customers," gloats Denver's mega-manager, Jerry Weintraub.) "John would be happy traveling, seeing the seven wonders of the world," figures Annie. "I'm pretty happy at home."

The difference now, of course, is that she has a reason—rather, two reasons—to stay there. After learning that John was unable to father children himself—a fact he has frankly acknowledged, though "People were first blown away when I was willing to say that I'm sterile"—the Denvers decided to adopt. To shorten the wait, they didn't specify sex or race but only that the babies be healthy. Zachary John, now 4, is one-quarter Cherokee, and Anna Kate, 2, is Japanese-American. "I feel an incredible bond with the women who gave birth to them," glows Annie. "But they are totally our children." "How did we ever live without those little children?" marvels John. "We were always meant to be together. It enhances everything."

They have certainly eased Denver's wildly gyrating emotional swings. A complicated and intense man (for all his onstage cheerfulness), Denver admits that his Rocky Mountain highs "have been balanced by incredible lows. When I get depressed," he admits, "I question whether life is worth living." Parenthood has changed that dire outlook and convinced him that "the epitome of being a man is being a father." For one thing, the children have altered John's Cuisinart approach to the consciousness movement. Where once he united yoga, est, aikido, pyramid power and rolfing, John has now discovered a more traditional faith. "Anna Kate likes to hold hands and pray at dinner. It's something special they enjoy doing," reports Annie, (est, to be sure, remains a passion, and Denver still praises Werner Erhard as "one of my dearest friends.") "I think more about the family now," sums up John. "That's an interesting progression for me." A "night person" on tour, Denver has had to readjust, especially to early rising. "No more making love in the morning," Annie cracks. He still spent half of last year away from Aspen, but now when he's there, he's there. "I used to be here physically, but my head would be on the road," he admits. For Annie, too, it's an adjustment. "She has all this stuff going—errands, visiting friends, taking care of the children," says John. "It's difficult to pull her out of that to where she will accept that I'm home and give me a little attention."

But John has been arriving or leaving on a jet plane since they met in 1966. He had just replaced Chad Mitchell in the folk-singing trio. After a concert at Gustavus Adolphus College in Saint Peter, Minn., he spotted a pretty sophomore in the student union. "I wore blue jeans, lumberjack shirt and penny loafers. John later told me he fell in love on the spot," recounts Annie. But it wasn't until a year later, when John was giving a concert 10 miles away, that they had their first date. John hit it off with her restaurateur father and he "really appeals to those mothers," Annie jokes now. But she herself said no when



John proposed in 1967. But then, she adds, "I changed my mind. So my best friend called John and told him to ask me again." That time she accepted. "Of all the people I ever met in my life, he really seemed to care and love me. That's why I married him. There wasn't this—boom—sexual attraction, but he's that too."

John had first visited Aspen while courting Annie on a ski trip. He attached to it as only a rootless Air Force brat could. And after three years of living in Chicago and Minneapolis, the Denvers started house hunting in Aspen. John had left the trio, but his solo earnings had gone primarily toward making good the group's inherited debt. "There was nothing we could afford," he recalls. "This guy said, 'Let me show you some lots.' And he took us up on the hill here. There was lots of snow and it was near evening. Annie and I held hands and said, 'We'll take it.' We had found our home. It's as simple as that." Then, after Country Roads hit in '71, the Denvers suddenly could not only afford the payments on the land but moved to Aspen and erected the prize-winning redwood-and-glass contemporary house where they roost to this day. They have added a living room filled with earth-tone supergraphics, stained glass and plants, a separate guest house and small outdoor pool. Annie still does the shopping, cooking (John's favorite: chicken curry), dishes and laundry. A friend does her cleaning. When John is home they ski, go camping and hiking together. John also likes an occasional joint and, in summer, tattles Annie, "to take off all his clothes and go out and till the soil."

This month he will tape the second annual John Denver Pro-Am Ski Tournament in Heavenly Valley for an ABC special. At the same time, he will do a week-long stint at Harrah's Tahoe. He is also contemplating a wildlife documentary, Rocky Mountain Reunion, in the spring. Since Oh, God! he has read "tons" of scripts, but "I don't want to do another one just to do a movie."

Denver still gives time and money to what he calls his "concerns": anti-hunger programs, the antinuclear-power movement, endangered species, the ERA and the exploration of space (he's a board member of the National Space Institute). Although he "thought seriously about getting into politics a couple of years ago," Denver is now disenchanted. "It is one of the least effective arenas in the world," he has decided. "I frankly think I'm in a much more powerful position as a singer and songwriter." He no longer plans to do fund-raising concerts for politicians (as he did for Carter and McGovern), though he continues charity gigs like last month's UNICEF concert with the Bee Gees, Olivia Newton-John, et al. His own SRO tours will continue, with or without Top Ten records—"It's been so long I don't remember," he jokes, though "it sure would be nice to get one."

The muse and subject of so much of his writing still glows over "the romanticism of it all. It's like having a man defend your honor and fight for you," says Annie. "I think it is a wonderful thing that a lot of women have lost in liberation." Still, when John comes home from a hard stint at the studio looking for compliments, she sometimes annoys him by innocently asking, "Isn't that too much echo on your voice?" Zachary is equally blasé. John can't forget the time when, in a limo on the way to see his father perform, Zachary looked at the crowds and remarked to his parents: "Are all these guys going to hear some guy's dad sing?" "At times I've got a really big ego," John goes on, a bit misty-eyed. "But I'll tell you the best thing about me. I'm some guy's dad; I'm some little gal's dad. When I die, if they say I was Annie's husband and Zachary John and Anna Kate's father, boy, that's enough for me to be remembered by," says John Denver. "That's more than enough."



<http://www.people.co/m/people/archive/article/0%2c%2c20073026%2c00.html>

Secrets Behind the Making of Supergroup USA for Africa's Charity 'We are the World'

17 May 2015 James Desborough

Music producer Ken Kragen tells how he helped Lionel Richie, Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson gather megastars like Dylan, Springsteen and Diana Ross for the song

With a stellar line-up boasting 45 of the biggest names in music, We Are The World raised more than £40million to combat famine in Africa. But 30 years after the hit topped the UK charts, it's been revealed for the first time what went on behind the closed doors of the LA recording studio in 1985 - including how it almost fell to pieces following an explosive rant from Bob Geldof. The record featured the likes of Lionel Richie, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Kenny Rogers, Tina Turner, Billy Joel, Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Dionne Warwick, Willie Nelson, Al Jarreau, Bruce Springsteen, Daryl Hall, Huey Lewis, Cyndi Lauper, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Dan Aykroyd, Harry Belafonte, Lindsey Buckingham, Bob Geldof, John Oates and Smokey Robinson.



Legendary music manager Ken Kragen today relives the pressure of putting together the supergroup, telling how Prince failed to turn up to record the song because he was scared of being around people; Bob Dylan got stage fright and Michael Jackson was so intimidated, he hid in the toilets.

It's a glimpse into the lives of the world's biggest pop stars that few would ever have.

Now 78 and living in LA, Ken still can't quite believe he and friend Quincy Jones pulled it off. He says: "We never intended to have 45 artists there. That itself was a huge undertaking. But Quincy coined a fabulous phrase: 'Leave your egos at the door.'

"And we had that on a sign in the studio as you entered the room."

Ken - whose clients included Lionel Richie - was used to dealing with big stars, but having 45 icons in the same room, most at the same time, all with different ideas was always going to be a challenge.

He and his industry pals came up with the idea of a US supergroup when Bob Geldof pooled the best British talent to record Do They Know It's Christmas? after being left distraught by images of starving people in Ethiopia and Sudan.

Touched by Bob's efforts, Ken asked his client Lionel to write a song with pal Quincy and superstar Jacko.

He then set about getting the rest of the artists - by scanning the top of the charts and calling up agents.

Ken says: "On the 2nd January, I decided that I'm going to get two artists a day, and I'm going to work from the top of the record charts... I already had Michael who was number one, Lionel was maybe number three, Prince was number two. "My idea was, by the time I got into bed, I would add two artists until I got to 15-18 artists."

But Ken says his biggest move was convincing Bruce Springsteen to do the single – after that he didn't need to pick up the phone at all.

He said: "There are certain artists that are magnets. Lionel Richie has a great line, he says, 'you are who you hug'.

"Everybody wanted to hug Bruce Springsteen. Everybody wanted to stand next to Bruce Springsteen. Bruce was The Boss. And certainly, with the rockers, if Bruce is there they want to be there."

The wheels were in motion - but all wasn't smooth running.

Just a day before they were set to record at the famous A&M Studios in LA one globally renowned rock group – that Ken refuses to name – threatened to pull out of the project because they thought it would harm their street cred.

According to Ken, it was divine intervention from Springsteen that saved the day.

Ken says: "Bruce told the band: 'I didn't come out here to walk away. I came here to save lives - I came here to feed people. I'm going to be there'. "If Bruce stayed and the other rockers had left, they would've looked terrible. The next day, everybody was there."

Ken recalls another story involving 'The Boss' which he says epitomises the man .

On the night of the recording, the stars began arriving in stretch limos.

"There was a huge crowd of people outside and I was standing at the front of the studios welcoming the artists," says Ken.

"All of a sudden, through the crowd, this guy pushes his way to the front. He's in a leather jacket, wearing cut-off gloves, and it's Bruce. "And he says to me, 'I got a great parking space there over by La Brea.'

"That's his opening line to me. Everybody else came by limo, Bruce drove himself and parked across the street, walked through the crowd, and they didn't even realize it was Bruce coming through."

One notable absentee that night however was Prince - who was too shy to perform in front of his peers.

Ken says: "One of the reasons Prince didn't turn up, and Prince later recorded a song for the We Are The World album, is because he always recorded alone and not with an engineer.

"He would go into the studio, do his own engineering and record every instrument and sing and no one else would be there. All of a sudden, he couldn't be in a room with his peers.

"He knew it was a mistake. It was unfortunate that he didn't show."

But Ken was most surprised that Bob Dylan struggled with stage fright.

"I'm a huge fan of his, and when he had to record his part of the song it just didn't sound like Bob," he says.

"Quincy and Lionel cleared the studio, and they had him go up to the microphone, they sat down at the piano, did his part and imitated what he should sound like, then he went up to the microphone and did it.

"Bob's a very shy guy to begin with, and to make him perform like he was used to, they had to record his part alone."

If recording the vocals was troublesome, it was nothing compared to taking the record cover photo.

When they came to take it, the man who co-wrote the song – Michael Jackson – was missing.

"The picture that was taken for the album cover, and was the front cover of Time magazine, was done first but we couldn't find Michael," remembers Ken.

"I went looking for him all through the studio until I found him in the bathroom curled up on the



counter. He was so intimidated. He had never recorded with all these superstars.

"I said to him, 'Michael, you've gotta come out. You wrote the record.'"

As if this wasn't drama enough, there was nearly another major fallout when Ken invited Bob Geldof to come and see the work they were doing - only for him to be left aghast when he saw them all munching on food and treats in the green room.



Grabbing the microphone, he nearly threatened to bring down the whole thing, not realising the food had been donated for free.

"I don't know who, but someone had contributed complete catering," recalls Ken. "We had this huge layout of food. And we created a little stage with a microphone in case any of the artists want to come in and talk to the group."

"So I'm in the studio, and someone comes in and says to me Geldof is talking to the group and to come quick."

"I go into the room and Geldof is on the stand telling these people, cursing away, saying, 'You people are here eating all this food when there's people starving in Africa'."

"He's thinking that money has been spent on catering, but everything was free."

"Geldof went on saying when he did Do They Know It's Christmas?, he went out and got Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonald's for the group that was that. But here we've got this elaborate selection of food."

"About a third of the room left, at least half the people. We lost a bunch of people because they felt guilty that Bob thought they were partying. Ken still had an enormous amount of talent on the track - but there were some stars that Ken, who now teaches at the Herb Alpert School of Music at UCLA, still wishes were on it."

"Barbra Streisand," he exclaims. "She originally agreed, but then one of her advisors talked her out of it. She always regretted it."

"Like a number of artists they start worrying if they should do it or not. Remember, nobody knew We Are The World was going to be a success."

But he also regrets turning some others down - including country music legend John Denver.

"He had been a client of mine, I knew him well, and he was a tremendous activist for hunger and poverty in America," muses Ken.

"Quincy felt that he would skew it too far towards the commercial pop area. And he wasn't that hot at that time, his big hey-day was in the 70s. He was right, but I felt really bad about that."

"If I had it to do it again, I certainly would've seen that John would be part of it."

The recording itself went through the night. And to this day, Ken still remembers the sheer relief and adulation he felt once artists had come through the studio door to record their part of the song. "We finished at eight in the morning. Left in the studio was Diana Ross, Quincy, myself and Tom Bahler - who was the vocal arranger for the song," he says.

You know, we were just sitting on the floor of the studio, hugging and crying. But I knew this wasn't the end. This was only the beginning."

Two months after releasing We Are The World, the charity USA for Africa, the same name as the supergroup, received its first check for its record sales. Armed with that money, Ken went straight to Africa to help.

Ken says: "The first check we picked up was for \$5 million, and we picked that up in May. Then, we immediately put a trip together to go to Africa and we flew up a huge cargo plane full of supplies."

Ken and a group of 26 made the trip to Sudan including charity board members and doctors and then spent the next few years making sure the money went to those who needed it the most.

Today, Ken still can't believe the impact they were able to make.

"I will always consider it the most remarkable achievement of my life, not just career. I was able to help. I was able to contribute to a continent that needed our support. And, to this day, that will always make me proud."

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/secrets-behind-making-supergroup-usa-5714491>

Annie Denver Today

Sean Reagan – 17th May 2011

I've written before about the importance of John Denver in my life. I truly believe that his influence was as profound as that of the Catholic church when I was growing up. His music was bright and loving and joyful and we experienced it that way in our home. And even if I was unsure about some of the nuances – even if I wasn't walking around making grand theological statements about John Denver songs – I knew that he represented a spirituality I both needed and wanted.

In the circles of A Course in Miracles, John Denver sometimes seems to be approaching sainthood. I don't know how he'd feel about that. Maybe it doesn't matter. I never saw him – not back when he was alive and creating music and not now that he's gone – as someone who was pursuing some otherworldly ideal. I don't know that he wanted to be glorified for his personal gifts



– I think he wanted to use them to bring us closer to the joy and peace that he experienced and knew was possible. I think he wanted to be a teacher in the truest sense of the world, one who leads and then stands aside when the student is ready to walk alone.

I could go on at length about my favorite John Denver songs, but the one I've been humming lately has been "Annie's Song."

Annie Denver seems to have been the muse for some of Denver's best work. I recognize that his personal life was not always roses and boxes of chocolates – you get hints of that in this memorial speech given by Annie Denver (and on the same page you can read Bryant Gumbel's interview with her which I'm told was pretty obnoxious in person. In the text, Annie comes off very centered and calm.)

Denver's issues are fine with me. Nobody's perfect and it's facing that imperfection and insisting on grace and beauty despite them that brings us close to the love that is God. This is the essence of important songs like Rocky Mountain High. My guess is that Annie Denver today would accept that as well and encourage people simply to focus on the songs – on the message, if you will – and work to integrate it into our lives. As Tara Singh might say, bring it into application. Or as John Denver said Reach for the future and hope for tomorrow and all that you can be."

Anyway, Annie's Song has always been special to me because it links our love of a person – the special relationship in Course lingo – to the beauty and majesty of the natural world. "You fill up my senses . . ." I know a lot of writers who dismiss Denver as trite, who consider him something akin to a cheap Hallmark card, but that's to overlook way too much of his work. That phrase, that idea of a person filling our senses . . . it's perfect and powerful. If you haven't been there, haven't felt that, then don't stop searching until you do. In the same way that a sunset or a shooting star or a mountain standing solemn and tall in the moonlight can literally drop us to our knees, so can love. So can that special someone. Every time I talk to my mother about John Denver, we always return to the notion that he left too soon. What a tragedy when he could have left us more work, more songs. I feel that. I imagine the people who are shared his life in a more intimate way feel that to a degree that I can only imagine. But at the same time, we have to be thankful for

them – for his children, for his partners like Annie Denver – because they served as his muse. They were the special relationships through which Denver saw and understood our inner Christ. They were the vehicles that the Spirit flowed through, coming to fruition in his creative gift. I feel that love and happiness when he sings, and I am never not grateful for it.

<http://seanreagan.com/annie-denver-today/>

Aspen in October

Willie has been organising the various artists that will be appearing this year in Aspen on October 8 – 12.

Here are some of the artists who have been locked in already for October:

8th – Aspen Showcase (Day 1) hosted by Willie Hoevers 1pm

9th – Meet & Greet

9th – Aspen Meadows

9th – Ron Matthews in Concert

9th – Aspen Showcase (Day 2) hosted by Willie Hoevers 1pm

10th – Mark Cormican with his band, Starwood

10th – Aspen Showcase (Day 3) hosted by Willie Hoevers 12 pm

10th – Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

11th – Pine Creek Cookhouse luncheon 11am

13th – Goodbye Again 9am

We also know that the Colorado-based Brad Fitch will be appearing, as will The John Denver Project Band, and Wolfgang Adolf. More information will be divulged when it comes to hand, or you can check out the Aspen in October community on Facebook.

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

Jim and Anne Curry

Please check out Jim and Anne's website for their forthcoming concerts around America.

<http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/john-denver-tribute-concert/>

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Spirit

*His spirit joined and so was formed
Ten thousand years ago
Between the swan and Hercules
Where even dark clouds glow*

*To live with grace, to ride the swell
To yet be strong of will
To love the wind, to learn its song
And empty space to fill*

*Apollo taught me to rhyme
Orpheus taught me to play
Andromeda cast down her sign
And Vega lights my way*

*Smoke rings in a galaxy
An endless flight through time
Lyra gave her harp to him
And left him free to climb*

*A winters journey from the moon
To reach the summer sun
To rise again, to sing for you
A song that's yet unsung*

*Apollo taught me to rhyme
Orpheus taught me to play
Andromeda cast down her sign
And Vega lights my way*

*His spirit joined and so was formed
Ten thousand years ago
Between the swan and Hercules
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*To live with grace, to ride the swell
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To love the wind, to learn her song
And empty space to fill*

