



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – October 2018

Welcome

Welcome to the October newsletter. Many of you who have travelled to the various John Denver tributes will be home by now, filled with memories of a wonderful time with friends. Celebrating the music of John Denver undoubtedly brings people together. Colorado put her best dress on this year and the snowfalls looked beautiful. Our group celebrated in the country town of Kurri Kurri, which is located about 40 kilometres from Newcastle in NSW.

Our deepest condolences

Susan Leaver of Auckland New Zealand passed away on October 26 in Aspen Colorado. I knew Susan for many years through the various newsgroups that sprung up after John's passing in 1997. She was the leader of the New Zealand fan-based group and I did receive some newsletters from the group over the years. I met Susan for the first time in Aspen in 2009. Her enthusiasm for the events that were offered that year was clear to see, and as I bumped into her at different venues, she made a point of coming over and chatting. I had met her again in Aspen in 2012 and again in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2014, when I nipped across the Tasman Sea to attend Bevan Gardiner's concert. I was surprised when I was told that she hadn't made it to Aspen last year for the 20th anniversary.

Susan arrived in Aspen in October, 2018 for the 21st anniversary. She appeared to be unwell but enjoyed her time there with her friends, who were very concerned about her health. The day after everyone left, Susan was admitted to the Aspen Valley Hospital. She hadn't told her friends that she was terminally ill, and she may have chosen to spend her last days in Aspen, close to the mountains and the music of John Denver. The wonderful staff at the Aspen Valley Hospital took care of her as she slipped from this earth. Susan had organised to be cremated and her ashes will be given to friends for safe-keeping. They will be scattered at a special memorial service in Aspen in 2019. Godspeed, Susan! Your journey here is over, and the next chapter has begun. Rest in peace.

2018 JD Tribute Weekend

Thanks to everyone who contributed and who attended our annual tribute weekend. It was a bit of a rush pulling everything together this year, as most of us were somewhere else for the months leading up to the weekend. A big thanks to Gus and Bruce, who along with Alistair, provided a wonderful evening of music and song. Thanks to Pat Evans, who decided to join us for the Saturday evening singalong and who enjoyed herself immensely.

No weekend can happen without the annual fundraiser, and our raffle raised \$237. A quick sale of sundry JD related items raised a further \$110.15, and donations totaled \$90. Together with other small amounts of money we have been given during the year, a total of \$550 will be donated to Peggy McDonald of Higher Ground Raptors.

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

I would like to extend my personal thanks to all who participated. Davy Turner of England donated the silhouette painting of John Denver, which was our first prize in the raffle. Melanie, who donated many items, including the book and DVD pack, and a number of items, which were sold on the night. Thanks to Carmel and Alistair who organised the plaques, trees, and did the shopping AND provided the Friday night dinner. John and Alistair are our resident diggers and although we didn't have formal letters to read out this year, we did plant our trees for John, Sandy, and for Dolly, Jan's mum, who also passed away in August.

Lastly, I know that when help is needed, this wonderful group of caring friends roll up their sleeves and put their energies into helping out. Individually we sometimes face tough times and this year has been particularly challenging for many of our members. I would like to give you a HUGE (((hug))) for the times that you have reached out and touched those in need. It seems that nothing can break the bonds of friendship within this group.

Winners!

Everyone is a winner in my opinion!

The raffle winners were:

First Prize: The original painting by Davy Turner was won by Gus.

Second Prize: A large tote bag filled with goodies was won by Beverley Underwood.

Third Prize: A book and DVD pack was won by Pat Evans.

From Peggy McDonald

I received this lovely email from Peggy, who is still travelling overseas fulfilling her obligations for the Churchill Fellowship.

Hi to all my HGA friends,
I just wanted to say hello and to let you know that all is going well as I travel around on my Churchill Fellowship.

On many occasions I have felt especially close to you all and the great J.D. most notably when I flew over the Rocky Mountains and the first time I held a bald eagle.

This fellowship is really validating the need to keep pushing the raptor sector at home towards better practices and standards, and all the blood sweat and tears is well and truly worth it.

I have been to North Carolina, Minnesota, Sitka Raptor centres and still have Nova Scotia, Abu Dhabi and then South Africa to go.

If any of you are interested you can check out all the action on my HGRC Facebook page.

I thought you might like to see this picture!
Onwards and upwards and kindest regards to you all.

Your friend Peggy



I notified Peggy of the results of our raffle and she was delighted with the donation of \$550, and this was her response.

Wow that is fabulous. 🙏💖

Very exciting because I've been trying to raise money for a pond for the sea eagles and that will almost pull it over the line!

What a terrific effort you all put in for me and for the birds.

I am so appreciative as you know. I hope next year you can all come and visit for your annual get together.

I'm getting a bit panicky about the report I have to put together when I get home but I have a feeling that the God of raptors will shine down upon me and help me out, and perhaps even JD will be up there knowing I need a hand and guiding me so that it all goes smoothly. It is such a responsibility because I have the potential to make so much change for the better for the birds.

I've also decided I'm going to have an animated video made as part of my report. Not sure how yet but it will happen.

Thank you so much for that great news It's a bonus because I really just wanted you all to see the picture!

Love to everyone

Peggy

Take me Home, Country Roads

It may have been selected as West Virginia's state song, but **Take me Home, Country Roads** is far, far more than that.

The song that John Denver co-wrote with Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert, not only became John's first 'Number One' record, but it has become the most well-recognised song in the world after *Happy Birthday*. Unlike *Happy Birthday*, however, one can listen to *Country Roads* any time and any day of the year.

During my recent holiday in Ireland, I was not only surprised, but delighted to experience the enthusiasm in which the younger generation responded to the song when we attended the numerous music festivals over the summer.

Musicians may have used different arrangements and they may have added a few excerpts from popular Irish songs between the verses and the chorus, but the result was magical and joyful as everyone joined in.

Last year, whilst attending Jimmy Fong's concert in Aspen, the little girl sitting behind me flawlessly sang every word of the song along with Jimmy. To me, it was the most poignant moment of my Aspen experience. The reaction of an audience provides the atmosphere and the true meaning of a concert. That little girl gave me so much pleasure, just by knowing that she was touched by John's music and Jimmy's delivery of the song.

Recently, the magic of *Country Roads* was evident when Jimmy performed in front of his own countryfolk in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

Together, his audience sang along with the words that 'everyone in the world' knows, regardless of their cultural and ethnic background. In my experience, no other song 'speaks' to people the way this one does. Click the link to listen to Jimmy and his audience in Penang sing together!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifDTU-fNC0c&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0ko8v15LumH2sY0u9NAGj83hi0uqAwmkzthUvnoGAde_Q9uZGIwJjJqHY



Higher Ground Australia Website

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>. I'm working on some changes, so please check it out from time to time. Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com with your comments, and I thank those who have sent me valuable feedback recently.

John Denver Celebration Concert Tickets

The John Denver Celebration Concert will be touring Australia in December. The concerts start in Sydney on 14th December, Gold Coast on the 15th, Tamworth on the 16th, Newcastle on the 18th, Wyong on the 19th, Adelaide on the 21st, Melbourne on the 22nd, and Perth on the 23rd December. Tickets are available from <https://metropolistouring.com/john-denver/> Book early, as this is going to be a very popular concert.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

5 Reasons why you should Shamelessly love John Denver

Jeremiah Craig October 12, 2015

I completely forgot that today was Columbus Day until late this morning but I knew that today was the day John Denver passed away 18 years ago right from the start. So obviously, John Denver is much more important to me than Christopher Columbus.

Eighteen years ago today, the world lost an incredible performer when John Denver died in an airplane crash while piloting his experimental Rutan Long-EZ plane in California. Even though he left us with some great music, many people I have come across through my travels scoff at his music and explain some completely baseless reasons why he was horrible. I'm always one to shamelessly reply that they have no idea what they are talking about. So to celebrate his life on this day, here is a list why John Denver was one of the most incredible performers to ever grace this earth.

Love John Denver and Don't Care Who Knows It
1. Pure Emotion

When you really listen to John Denver, you notice he sings with everything he has at that moment. His entire heart and soul go into the song. It's truly apparent that the song and what is being said in the song is all that matters to him. Even if you don't like the topics that he sings about, you have

to respect the fact that he puts everything into his craft. Just like you would respect anyone else who puts everything they have into their trade. In a world of instant gratification where emotion is becoming more like a fleeting commodity, Denver's music is a refreshing thing to have around to remind us what really matters.

2. Ridiculous Vocal Range

If you've ever tried to sing along with "The Eagle and the Hawk" you know how hard it is to keep up with Denver. In fact, it's gotten to the point where no one else should even try to cover that song anymore. Just don't. The Blind Pilot's covered it on a tribute album and it was a serious let down. Denver's vocal range and power can only be equalled by a few artists out there. It is pure talent. So, when a person says that John Denver sucks they're also saying that they're an idiot.

3. His Love of Nature

Nature will always be cool so don't be ashamed that John Denver sings about birds, mountains, forests and deserts. He also sings about love of course but his main themes are about enjoying his home and the outdoors with people he loves. Seems like a pretty respectable theme to me. Plus, his love of nature can be yours too and all with a free login into YouTube or Spotify!

4. Two of His Songs Were Adopted as State Songs

Talk about leaving a legacy. Colorado adopted "Rocky Mountain High" as their official state song and West Virginia adopted "Take Me Home, Country Roads" as their official state song. Don't know about you but I think that's pretty damn cool.

5. His Joy of Music

John Denver has a good time performing. You can tell in his recordings just like you can feel the emotion in his music like I mentioned before. Especially in his live stuff. It's a shame that he's gone now because this world needs more people who really love what they do and Denver could make you feel that in his music. His passion will be missed but luckily we have it recorded so we can visit it whenever we want.

So do yourself a favour and listen to some John Denver today and don't be afraid to shamelessly love what you hear. Scream it to the world...

'I LOVE JOHN DENVER!!!'

Mark Cormican

Christmas concert:

Saturday December 8th at 7:00 p.m. The location is the **Colorado Center for Musical Arts at 200 E. Baseline Rd, Lafayette, CO.** We're doing a combination of traditional tunes with some Christmas music by Gordon Lightfoot, Tom Paxton, John Denver, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, a few of my own original Christmas songs and maybe some bluegrass music in the mix.

Go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-colorado-christmas-with-mark-cormican-starwood-tickets->

52078274521?aff=ebdssbdestsearch for tickets. It's going to be fun for the entire family! See you there!

If you can't make it to Mark's concert, you can purchase the recently-released *Christmas is Calling* CD. Check out Mark's website for details. <http://markcormican.com/product/christmas-is-calling/>

Jim Curry

In case you haven't heard, Jim will be touring Australia in December with the John Denver Celebration Concert. He is also very busy performing in the USA before and after the Australian tour.

Check out his concert schedule on his website: <https://www.jimcurrymusic.com/future-concerts/>

Back Home Again

A tribute to John Denver.

"In this time of environmental concerns, and Americans' efforts to simplify their lives, it seems that John Denver's music and message are even more relevant today, yet you rarely hear his music on the radio anymore."

Tom Becker is a former member of the Legendary Folk Group, The New Christy Minstrels, and has gone on to appear with Grammy Winners and Music Legends including Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Gregg Allman and Jerry Jeff Walker.

Check out Tom's website for his forthcoming show schedule.

<http://www.johndenvertribute.net/schedule.htm>

Tom's next tribute show will be on November 11 and 12 in Sarasota, Florida. Click the link for details and tickets. <https://thepopsorchestra.org/>

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon have a series of Christmas concerts planned for the next month, starting from **November 30** at Stadium Theatre Performing Arts Centre, 28 Monument Sq, Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Check out Chris' Facebook page for details and tickets.

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

This month, I've selected the lyrics *Whispering Jesse* in memory of Susan Leaver.

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.

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Whispering Jesse

(John Denver)

*I often have wandered in deep contemplation
It seems that the mind runs wild when you're all alone
The way that it could be
The ways that it should be
Thing's I'd do differently if I could do them again*

*I've always loved spring time, the passing of winter
The green of the new leaves and life going on
The promise of morning
The long days of summer
Warm nights of loving her beneath the bright stars*

*I'm just an old cowboy from high Colorado
Too old to ride anymore, too blind to see
I sleep in the city now
Away from my mountains
Away from the cabin we always called home*

*I dream I left there
On an old Palomino
Whispering Jesse rode right by my side
I long to hold her
To hear her soft breathing
The touch of her cool hands on my fevered brow*

*Whispering Jesse still rides in the mountains
Still sings in the canyons
Still lives in my heart*