



**HIGHER  
GROUND  
AUSTRALIA**

<http://www.hgavic.com>

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## HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – October 2021

### WELCOME



Welcome to our very special newsletter as we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Higher Ground Australia's inaugural gathering in The Grampians, Victoria, in October 2001.

Initially started by Mark Capper and called Higher Ground, the Australian Friends of John Denver in May, 2001, our first gathering was made up of a group of people, who up until that first October, had never met except online.

Within minutes, we became firm friends and formed a strong foundation to our group, which later became Higher Ground Australia. The shorter title, our regular newsletters and me being nominated group leader happened eighteen years ago in 2003. We have weathered many storms over the years; members have come and gone, some have passed from this world, whilst others have quietly stepped back. From such humble beginnings, I did not realise that we would, over the years, become a globally-recognised and well-respected group.

I'm sure that the key to our success thus far was to keep things simple, to enjoy each other's company as we celebrate the life and music of John Denver. Over the years, our annual fundraisers have raised many thousands of dollars for raptor rehabilitation in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. We've also managed to raise awareness of John's music to younger people through the donation of the Dawn Publications series of picture books to many schools across Australia. And most importantly, we have planted at least one hundred trees across our jurisdictions to honour John and to strive for peace. As

years passed, so did some of our beloved members, each of whom have trees planted in their honour.

HGA has provided many opportunities, has introduced us to people from all walks of life across the globe, many of whom have become true and lifelong friends. Our lives were enhanced when we met Max Moore, John's Australian tour manager in 2005. Max's 'John' stories were legendary. One thing that stands out is that no matter who I have met over the years or where I have had conversations with people, almost everyone from my era has a 'John Denver' story to tell. From the Canadian historian and musician who sang 'Poems, Prayers and Promises' at a politician's funeral to the security guard at the 1977 concert at Melbourne's Myer Music Bowl and the ordinary person in the street who had a brief encounter with him personally, there is a common theme as they recount their stories; that John was the nicest person they had ever met. That in itself is a legacy that most people would like to own.

But the success that HGA has had for the past twenty years is not mine. It belongs to each and every one of our members who have, over the past twenty years, given much time, expertise, donated goods and money, and most importantly, supported each other. I cannot guarantee that HGA will continue for another twenty years, but we will be around for quite some time to come.

On this twentieth anniversary of Higher Ground Australia, I would like to acknowledge all of the members who have passed away. I cannot name them all, but there are some who are close to our hearts and warrant a special mention; our founding member, Margaret Gilby, Max Moore, and Sandra Horwell, all of whom contributed much to HGA. Steve Weisberg, whom some of us met in person for the first time in 2012, and who quickly became true friends to us all collectively and individually, Susan Leaver from New Zealand, my Colorado mate, Pat Feldmeier, and more recently Billy Jacobs, who will be sadly missing from Aspen this year.

It's hard to believe that when we first gathered near Hall's Gap on October 12, 2001 that twenty years later, we would be in the middle of a global pandemic and that our borders would be firmly closed; that Australians would not be able to attend the AIO events in 2021, nor would we be able to host our

annual gathering for the second year in a row. However, we would like to extend warm wishes for the events taking place in Aspen this year. We truly hope that those gathering there enjoy their time together and make a special effort to visit the sanctuary and pray for a time that we shall once again gather together to celebrate the music of our beloved John Denver.

#### **BEACH CLEAN UP 2021 – PACIFIC GROVE**

From Connie Poquette

Unfortunately, our 2021 beach clean-up and gathering will also need to be cancelled. With the ongoing Covid-19 Delta variant phase of this pandemic, it would be prudent to ask everyone again consider making 2021 a year to stay safe and cancel the annual event that would have been held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of October, October 10, 2021. We shall meet again in 2022, hopefully. 2022 will be the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary.

I have heard that the beach pull-out area has been newly paved, the plaque has been cleaned and the log has been placed behind the plaque on the sand. If you drive to the beach on Sunday and/or Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>, remember safety protocols.

I have been told that radio DJ Willie Hoevers may be at the JD beach pull-out on Tuesday. If you are nearby, stop and let Willie know that John is still remembered fondly and missed by many.

Please be safe, stay healthy and let's hope we can gather next year.

#### **PACIFIC GROVE PLAQUE**

From Rachel of the Carmel Valley to Judy Therrien  
Hi Judy, Matt (professional in this kind of work) and I met up yesterday afternoon and spent 3 1/2 hours working on the plaque. He explained there was a tremendous amount of build up from all the years of wax and protective spray. He stripped it down and now the image and the letters are in much better shape; he has been doing this work since 1998.

It is not done yet. It was a bit chilly and as you know the temp has to be right. So, for now the image, the wording and the outer frame have been restored. The background is stripped down but is green and oxidized but will be Part 2 of the restoration. Once that is done it will be sealed with a polyurethane spray and a special wax. Future care will only require a rinse and wax.

He is an extremely nice man and loves his work.

#### **LATE SINGER JOHN DENVER HAD A PASSION FOR MUSIC, LIFE AND ACTIVISM: HE WAS A PURELY GOOD GUY**

July 31, 2021. Closer Magazine Staff



In 1997, the single-engine fiberglass plane Grammy-winning singer John Denver was piloting off the coast of California suffered a catastrophic failure. It abruptly stalled in midair, plunged 500 feet and crashed into Monterey Bay, killing its only occupant. The "Take Me Home, Country Roads" crooner was just 53.

Despite the brevity of his life and career, John touched people's hearts with sincere, often joyful songs that reflected the world's beauty and the promise of true love. "He was a purely good guy, and people got that," his former business manager and close friend, Hal Thau, exclusively tells Closer. "You can't fake that."

John cared deeply about nature and the state of the world — he was an environmentalist long before it became fashionable — but he was also a complicated man. "It's not an easy thing to be sensitive, thoughtful, mindful and caring of so many things," another good friend, Bruce Gordon, the founder of the nonprofit EcoFlight, tells Closer in the magazine's latest issue, on newsstands now.

John's 1982 divorce from his first wife, Annie Martell — for whom he wrote the classic "Annie's Song" — wounded him deeply. And like so many successful people, he found the demands of work often kept him away from his children, Zachary, Anna Kate and Jessie Belle. "He would talk about the kids all the time," says Gordon. "He would always miss the kids."



Born Henry John Deutschendorf Jr., the future writer of hits like "Rocky Mountain High" saw a lot of America as he moved from state to state due to his father's career in the Air Force. "His father was a colonel and a tough, stern guy," recalls Thau.



John's grandmother noted the boy's shyness and gifted him a Gibson guitar to keep him company. "Music is what opened the door for me," once said John, who spent his teen years in Fort Worth, Texas. "I was in a chorus class, and they asked me to bring my guitar to school one day, which I did, and all of a sudden people knew me."

But at home, the Emmy winner and his father didn't get along. "I ran away from home when I was a senior in high school," recalled the humanitarian, who found himself penniless shortly after he arrived in California. "Dad came out and got me, and we drove home together and talked a little bit, but I don't know that anything was really solved."

In college, John studied architecture, but he was drawn to the blossoming folk music scene of the early 1960s. He joined the Mitchell Trio for a time before setting out as a solo act. Along the way, he changed his surname to "Denver" for the capital of his favorite state, Colorado.

He released three solo albums and wrote "Leaving on a Jet Plane" (which became a hit for Peter, Paul and Mary) before his 1971 breakthrough *Poems, Prayers & Promises* introduced the world to John's signature songs, "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "Sunshine on My Shoulders." He would go on to become the most successful solo artist on RCA Records after Elvis Presley. "I don't want to entertain people. I want to touch them," said John, whose 1973 *Greatest Hits* album stayed in the Top 200 for more than three years and sold more than 10 million copies.



John married Annie in 1967. They adopted two children, Zachary and Anna Kate, and eventually put down roots in Aspen, Colo. "He liked being at home," Gordon shares with *Closer*. "And he was happiest in nature — whether it was taking a walk, sitting by a waterfall or diving off one. He could dive off a 50-foot cliff and land it flawlessly."

His closest friends believe that Annie was the love of John's life, but it wasn't enough to hold them together. They divorced after 15 years of marriage. "Annie was becoming a therapist, and she wanted more out of the relationship in terms of John staying home," says Thau. It's been said that John sawed their marital bed in half in anger after their separation, but his friends insist he and Annie never stopped loving each other. "A lot of things are blown out of proportion," Thau reveals. "They were always good friends even after the divorce."



While John's private life knew many ups and downs — his second marriage, to Cassandra Delaney, mother of his daughter Jessie Belle, also ended in divorce — his commitment to making the world a better place never wavered. After his showbiz career slowed down, he began devoting more time to environmental activism. "If he had lived, he would have been one of the biggest spokespeople on climate change," says Gordon. "A lot of people wanted him to run for office, but he felt like he could do more by influencing people without being a politician."

John's passing didn't end that hope. Today, his children are working with Brian Schwartz, an estate manager, to keep his legacy alive. "I grew up on John Denver's music," Schwartz tells *Closer*, explaining that he hopes to put together a feature film about the Grammy Hall of Famer's life, a documentary about his activism and a Broadway musical based on his songbook. "John left behind a legacy, not only of music but of his environmental and social activism," Schwartz says. "The biggest thing we are doing is making sure that his message continues to reach new audiences."

<https://www.closerweekly.com/posts/late-singer-john-denver-had-a-passion-for-music-life-activism/>



**JOHN DENVER TREASURED HIS HOME LIFE WHEN HE WASN'T ON STAGE, PAL SAYS: 'HE WOULD MISS THE KIDS.'**

The 'Rocky Mountain High' singer passed away in 1997 at age 53

Stephanie Nolasco – Fox News August 8, 2021

Bruce Gordon's life was forever impacted after befriending John Denver.

The singer/songwriter, known for his sunny hits from the '70s such as "Rocky Mountain High" and "Sunshine on My Shoulders," was killed instantly in 1997 when his experimental plane crashed into Monterey Bay. He was 53.

His pal, the founder of the nonprofit EcoFlight, told Closer Weekly's latest issue that the star was a complex figure who cared deeply for the environment.

"It's not an easy thing to be sensitive, thoughtful, mindful and caring of so many things," Gordon told the outlet.



Photo by Luciano Viti/Getty Images

In his lifetime, Denver quickly became a beloved musical figure. Fourteen of his albums went gold and eight were ranked as platinum, with more than a million units sold. The LP "John Denver's Greatest Hits" is still one of the largest selling albums in the history of RCA Records, with worldwide sales of more than 10 million copies. He was also named Country Music Entertainer of the year in 1975.

But according to Gordon, it was his family – not success – that always came first for the star.

"He would talk about the kids all the time," Gordon told the outlet. "He would always miss the kids."

Denver is survived by three children: Jessie Belle, Anna Kate and Zachary.



Photo by Chelsea Lauren/WireImage/Getty Images

"He liked being at home," said Gordon. "And he was the happiest in nature – whether it was taking a walk, sitting by a waterfall or diving off one. He could five off a 50-foot cliff and land it flawlessly."

According to Gordon, Denver devoted more of his time to environmental activism in his later years – and many people wondered if the star would pursue politics.

"A lot of people wanted him to run for office, but he felt like he could do more by influencing people without being a politician," he said.

In his lifetime, Denver made that sentiment known to the public.

"Music does bring people together," Denver once said. "It allows us to experience the same emotions. People everywhere are the same in heart and spirit. No matter what language we speak, what color we are, the form of our politics or the expression of our love and our faith, music proves: We are the same."



Photo by Paul Natkin/Getty Images

Denver, a licensed pilot, was in a previous plane accident in April 1989. He walked away uninjured after the 1931 biplane he was piloting spun around while taxiing at an airport in northern Arizona.

"We are all very broken up over this," said family friend Jerry McClain at the time of Denver's death. "The person John was in public was the person he was personally."

And while the revered artist met a tragic end, his family is determined to keep his legacy alive.

According to the outlet, Denver's children are working with Brian Schwartz. The estate manager hopes to put together a film about Denver's life, as well as a documentary about his activism and a Broadway musical based on his songbook.

"John left behind a legacy, not only of music but of his environmental and social activism," Schwartz told the outlet. "The biggest thing we are doing is making sure that his message continues to reach new audiences."

(The Associated Press contributed to this report.)

[https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/john-denver-family-pal-speaks-out?fbclid=IwAR1CTG5\\_mWrw9xIYOCagN\\_EYiyxTFcL5uSnU2iU1R240Z1WVZH40yR26DM](https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/john-denver-family-pal-speaks-out?fbclid=IwAR1CTG5_mWrw9xIYOCagN_EYiyxTFcL5uSnU2iU1R240Z1WVZH40yR26DM)



## **JOHN DENVER TRIBUTE FESTIVAL – APACHE JUNCTION ARIZONA**

The second John Denver Tribute Festival will be held in Apache Junction, Arizona on January 22, 2022 starting at 9:30am until sundown.

It will be held at Flatiron Park, with a big stage for musicians, food truck vendors, artists, vendors and information booths. Raffles of gifts donated by sponsors will be held throughout the day. Musicians include Brad Fitch, Brian Starck and other tribute artists singing their favourite John Denver songs and sharing their favourite John Denver stories.

For more information, contact Susan Kay Burke of Bawd Muse Entertainment LLC on [mistressbawd@msn.com](mailto:mistressbawd@msn.com)

### **RADIO PROGRAMMES – WILLIE HOEVERS**

Willie Hoever's of the Rocky Mountain Foundation for the Performing Arts has worked tirelessly to promote John's music through the foundation and through his regular radio programmes.

In 2013, Willie launched his fortnightly online show, 'The Music of John Denver' for American Veterans radio, which is available globally on [www.avradio.org](http://www.avradio.org)

The next show is on Saturday May 8 at 2pm Mountain Time.

4 - 6 pm Eastern time

3 - 5 pm Central time

2 - 4 pm Mountain time

1 - 3 pm Pacific time

12 - 2 pm Alaskan time

2100 - 2300 UK time

2200 - 0000 European time

Next Morning – Sunday May 9

4 - 6 am Japan time

6 - 8 am Sydney, Australia time

8 - 10 am New Zealand time

Additionally, Willie hosts the show in the UK on Ridge Radio. The next show will be held on May 15 at 6pm UK time [www.ridgeradio.co.uk](http://www.ridgeradio.co.uk)

Here is a time zone conversion chart:

6:00pm - 8:00pm UK Time

7:00pm - 9:00pm European Time

4:00am - 6:00am Sydney Australia Time

5:00am - 7:00am Auckland New Zealand Time

2:00am - 4:00am Tokyo Time

1:00pm - 3:00pm Eastern Time

12 Noon - 2:00pm Central Time

11am - 1:00pm Mountain Time

10:00am - 12pm Pacific Time

9:00am - 11:00am Alaskan Time

Watch this space for other syndicated shows. For more information, please contact Willie

[willie@rockymountainfpa.org](mailto:willie@rockymountainfpa.org)

<https://rockymountainfpa.org/home>

## **ASPEN IN OCTOBER – 2021 EVENTS**

(From the Aspen in October Facebook Page)

Please check the Facebook page for events and tickets.

[www.Facebook.com/aspeninOctober/events](http://www.Facebook.com/aspeninOctober/events)

### **TRIBUTE ARTISTS**

Check out your favourite tribute artists.

#### **CATHY GIANFALA CARRIERE**

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

#### **MARK CORMICAN**

<http://markcormican.com/schedule/>

#### **JIM CURRY**

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

#### **BACK HOME AGAIN**

A tribute to John Denver.

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

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

#### **CHRIS COLLINS AND BOULDER CANYON**

Chris Collins & Boulder Canyon has scheduled shows in August and September. Please check the website for details. <https://bouldercanyonband.com/concert-schedule>

#### **CHRIS WESTFALL**

Friday July 30 free concert at Bethany Beach Events & Entertainment. Details

[www.townofbethanybeach.com](http://www.townofbethanybeach.com)

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

#### **JOHN ADAMS**

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

#### **CHRIS BANNISTER**

<http://chrisbannisterthemusicofjohndenver.com>

#### **BRAD FITCH**

<http://www.cowboybrad.com>

#### **WILL KRUGER**

<http://www.willkruger.com>

#### **RICK SCHULER**

<http://www.sunshinerick.com>

#### **TED VIGIL**

<http://www.tedvigil.com>

#### **JOHN DENVER PROJECT BAND**

<http://johndenverprojectband.it>

#### **RON MATTHEWS**

<http://www.ronmathews.net>

For more information about tribute artists around the globe, check out our website; [www.hgavic.com](http://www.hgavic.com)





### **BACK HOME AGAIN**

I've included a couple of photos on this page. The first one is of the group who attended our first gathering twenty years ago in The Grampians region of Victoria in 2001. The second one of Sandra Horwell and Max Moore was taken at the John Denver Sanctuary during our visit to Aspen in 2007.

I've selected the 'Back Home Again' lyrics for this newsletter because those of you who are in Aspen probably do feel as though you have returned 'home'. As was written in both articles featured in this newsletter, John loved returning home after touring and working away. If you happen to go up to Starwood, from the gate it is possible to see the four-lane below 'a mile or so away'.

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.



## Back Home Again

(John Denver)

*There's a storm across the valley, clouds are rollin' in  
The afternoon is heavy on your shoulders  
There's a truck out on the four-lane, a mile or more away  
The whinin' of his wheels just makes it colder*

*He's an hour away from ridin' on your prayers up in the sky  
Ten days on the road are barely gone  
There's a fire softly burning, supper's on the stove  
It's the light in your eyes that makes him warm*

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Yes, and hey, it's good to be back home again*

*There's all the news to tell him, how'd you spend your time?  
What's the latest thing the neighbors say  
And your mother called last Friday, sunshine made her cry  
You felt the baby move just yesterday*

*Hey, it's good to be back home again, yes it is  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Yes, and hey, it's good to be back home again*

*Oh, the time that I can lay this tired old body down  
Feel your fingers feather soft on me  
The kisses that I live for, the love that lights my way  
The happiness that livin' with you brings me*

*It's the sweetest thing I know of, just spending time with you  
It's the little things that make a house a home  
Like a fire softly burning and supper on the stove  
The light in your eyes that makes me warm*

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Yes, and hey, it's good to be back home again  
Hey, it's good to be back home again, you know it is  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Hey, it's good to be back home again  
I said, hey, it's good to be back home again*

