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# HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – November 2017

## Welcome

“Peace is a conscious choice.”

— John Denver

My apologies for the delay in getting the newsletter out. October has gone, and the town of Aspen, where the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John’s untimely death was marked with many concerts and activities, was as beautiful as ever. The weather and the scenery were magnificent, as usual. I arrived in Aspen with Rhonda Banditt, whom many of you know. Our road trip from San Francisco, CA took us through magnificent National and State Parks, a portion of Route 66, and Navaho parks. The beauty of each of the places we visited cannot properly be explained in words. We met my friend, Pat, from Calgary, and together we spent a ‘snow day’ at Red Rocks and Dinosaur Ridge. We found a balancing rock inside the Garden of the Gods, and doing so, solved a mystery for Pat, before we rose to new heights by way of the cog railway, which took us to the top of the world, or at least, Pikes Peak. The stunning views and the diversity of landscape will forever be remembered. The wonderful part of sharing travel experiences with others is that each person gets something quite different from the journey. Then we arrived in Aspen, the first time for Rhonda and Pat, and my fifth visit. I love driving through the mountains, the trees, lakes, mining towns, and even the fake policeman in Twin Lakes.

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One of the highlights of my days in Aspen was the opportunity to attend a jam session in a private home. In attendance were Mark Cormican, Mark Fowler, Mark (I won’t mention his surname lest he is mistaken for another with the same name), KJ Reimensnyder-Wagner, Will Kruger, and Jimmy Fong. The session was amazing! These master musicians gave a performance that was outstanding in a wonderful relaxed atmosphere. Thanks Jimmy and Julie, who invited me to tag along. Opportunities like this rarely come one’s way, and I am so glad that I was part of this really wonderful, magical night.



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AIO is a wonderful time to catch up with our HGA members and friends that I wouldn’t normally be able to catch up with. Breakfast time at the Lighthouse is a wonderful time for catching up with long lost friends. I met David and Theresa Belton from Alaska in 2015, and was delighted to see them again this year. Thank you to all the people who made the effort to say ‘hello’. It is always wonderful to have a chat to our members and friends. It is also wonderful to meet new people, who attended for the first time. Bill and Mary, Pat, Kathy, Gail, Julie. It was fun!!!!

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On October 14, I attended Jimmy Fong’s concert. When he played the opening bars to ‘Country Roads’, a little girl seated right behind me drew in a breath, and without missing one word, sang the song from beginning to end. For me, that was the most poignant moment of my time in Aspen. That little girl sang with such gusto and with such love that she epitomised the reason why there is an Aspen in October. I am so grateful that that little girl sat behind me.

Afterwards, Jimmy received an award from Willie and Luanne for his hard work as a performer to promote the music of John Denver.



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As previously mentioned, rarely do opportunities arise where a person has an experience that is so unique but at the same so very heartfelt. I had such an encounter, which I will never forget. Pat, you know what I’m talking about. I want to thank you publicly.

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I am blessed in so many ways. After AIO, I went to Nashville, and attended Renee Armand and Paul Aleman’s concert at the Franklin Theatre. The fully booked concert was wonderful. As well as the John Denver covers, Renee also sang her signature songs, *The Morning After*, *I want to go*

to Mexico, and Bony Fingers. There was a special moment when Renee's brother, Rick, with Renee sang a heartfelt song of his composition, whilst special guest, Rebecca Correia sang her songs, *Solid Ground* and *Oh Nashville*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvbnbLrv8Qs>

I was also delighted to meet Jennifer Anderson, who lives in Nashville and who had been in Aspen the previous week. Thanks to Renee, Paul Rick and the excellent musicians for a memorable night.



### **2017 JD Tribute Weekend**

[Written by Alistair Wilson, October 2017]

*Our 2017 Weekend Gathering at Pucks Ridge Retreat, Bellingen, NSW.*

*It was a very enjoyable weekend even although the numbers were small. Mike and Maureen travelled down from Russell Island in Qld and Colin and Sandy came all the way from Ballarat in Victoria. It was nice to see that Sandy was on the road to recovery after her particularly difficult year with her health. She looked great! John Comber travelled up from Nowra, and Carmel and I came up from Cessnock. The weekend was arranged by Vicki who lives in the area and she made us all welcome by providing a lovely dinner on the Friday evening.*



*It was the first time that I can recall when there were equal numbers of ladies and men! After the evening meal on Friday we all just sat on the patio and chatted away about the year past, enjoying the company over a few drinks. The annual general meeting was postponed until the next morning.*

*We woke to heavy rain on Saturday, so the meeting took place after breakfast. Later in the day, some of us ventured into the town and enjoyed the ambience of the village. In the evening, after our usual barbeque, we were pleasantly joined by Vicki's guitar teacher Yhan who gave us all a song or two from his repertoire. Then he had Vicki join him for two John Denver numbers they had been rehearsing: 'I Guess he'd Rather be in Colorado' and 'Darcy Farrow'. Then the sing-along began with Colin and me, and some occasional assistance from Yahn and Vicki. Everyone had an enjoyable evening and a few of us survived till midnight.*

*The next morning was a little hectic because we had to vacate the premises early as there was another group coming in, so it was "all hands on deck". Vicki had invited us all to her place for breakfast and we were planting the tree in that area later, when we arrived at Vicki's she introduced us to two friends of hers. Colin, who did the painting in her house, and his wife Marilyn who joined us for the morning.*

*Marilyn drew the winning ticket for the raffle and it was won by Carmel. Then after a lovely breakfast we headed across the road to a peaceful little area overlooking the Bellingen river. Our official digger John Comber prepared the hole and the banksia tree was planted by Sandy. The area is cared for by the residents who live there so Vicki assured us the tree shall be well looked after. Vicki also mentioned that two sea eagles fly into the area every afternoon, so no doubt they shall be keeping watch over the tree as well.*



*John Comber made special mention of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and said a few words on our behalf, he thanked everyone for their attendance, after the short ceremony and the usual sad goodbyes, we all made our way home, except for Colin and Sandy who were venturing on a well deserved Pacific Cruise.*

*All in all, a very relaxing time enjoying each other's company, and looking forward to heading to the southern highlands again next year for our 2018 gathering. See you all there!!*

### **2017 JD Annual Fundraiser**

The *On the Road to Aspen* quilt was raffled on the 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Carmel Wilson won the raffle this year.

The total proceeds from the raffle, including monies collected in Bellingen, and tickets sold by me: **\$156.00**

All proceeds of the quilt raffle will be donated to Higher Ground Raptors

<http://highergroundraptors.org/>

Other donations:

Kitty \$141.65

Donations \$202.35

Our total donation to *Higher Ground Raptors* will be **\$500.00**.

Thanks to all who sold raffle tickets and made personal donations. It is not too late to donate to this worthy cause. I'm sure Peggy would be delighted to receive a little more. Please email me on [hga.vic@gmail.com](mailto:hga.vic@gmail.com) if you would like to make a donation.

### **2017 JD Annual Book Donations**

We held our annual book giveaway and gave two picture story books to the following schools.

*Take me Home, Country Roads* was donated to St. Phillips Christian School near Cessnock. It was nominated by Alistair Wilson.

*Grandma's Feather Bed* was donated to Salisbury State School in Brisbane, and it was nominated by Mike Winnubst. Both books were posted to the schools a couple of weeks ago. Thanks for participating in this worthy activity.

I believe that giving these beautifully illustrated books to schools is a valuable way of both encouraging literacy and to increase recognition of the value of John Denver's songs to our next generation.

I would like our members to think about whether we should donate some books to an Aboriginal community next year. Your thoughts please.

If anyone would like to donate a book to be included in the book giveaway, please let me know. [hga.vic@gmail.com](mailto:hga.vic@gmail.com)

### **HGA Tribute Weekend 2018**

Our HGA weekend will be held in the Southern Highlands of NSW next year. The date will be confirmed once I find out when the official dates for AIO are. The Southern Highlands is where Peggy McDonald's *Higher Ground Raptor* facility is located and we are looking forward to catching up with Peggy and to find out more about the valuable work she has done with rehabilitating birds. We continue to support *Higher Ground Raptors*, and celebrate the commitment and love that Peggy has for her work with these magnificent birds.

As soon as the venue has been confirmed, I will advise through the newsletter.

**I have had a request to hold the weekend one week earlier to accommodate one of our founding members. Please let me know what you think. [hga.vic@gmail.com](mailto:hga.vic@gmail.com)**

### **Higher Ground Australia Website**

I have been asked to make a few changes to our information on the website, which I will do over the coming weeks. We aim to inform people about the work we have done in the past and the activities we are engaged in to promote the music of John Denver. Please keep checking the site from time to time.

As part of our goal to support tribute artists from all over the world, we have included a number of links to our website. If your name is not on the page, and you would like it to be included, please let me know. [hga.vic@gmail.com](mailto:hga.vic@gmail.com). Please check the links and let me know if there are any broken or incorrect ones. Our aim is to keep our information current and to provide information for the widest audience possible. Feedback on the site is always welcome.

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>.

### **HGA Facebook Group**

I have been asked why our Facebook page features overseas tribute artists, rather than only Australian ones. The answer is clear. We don't have a lot of tribute artists continually performing John Denver tribute shows. We feature Australian artists as often as we can, but since we belong to a global family, Facebook is used as a resource to advertise tribute artists to our global members.

The HGA Facebook Group is used to highlight not only tribute artists, but articles, photos, or YouTube clips that I think may be of interest to our members. If you are interested in viewing the page, or becoming a member, here is the link.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/416046055425315/>

### **AIO Magazine**

The very popular AIO magazine, which I sent to everyone with their newsletters in September will remain on the website for the rest of the year. If you haven't had a chance to read it yet, please take a moment to read what regular AIOers have said about past tributes. The students from Swinburne University in Hawthorn did a wonderful job designing the magazine. The contributions from you, the attendees, tribute artists, and friends of Higher Ground Australia made this magazine a real work of art. All students who worked on the finished product received high distinctions for this project. You can find it on the newsletter page

<https://www.hgavic.com/newsletters>



## **Upsetting Incident**

**“Peace is a conscious choice.”**

— John Denver

The twentieth anniversary year of Aspen in October, was, in my opinion marred by the negative attitude of a few (albeit very vocal) people. Facebook is a great way to communicate with people. Especially in the lead up to the tributes in Aspen, Facebook pages, such as *Aspen in October* are an excellent resource. I frequently use the information posted there to compile my own web pages and for advertising in this newsletter. Whilst most of the groups are benign, there are a few, which I shall not name and shame here, which have become a hotbed for toxic threads and abuse. Since March, 2017, Facebook has been used as a forum for abusing individual people. It appears that a comment, which may have been an opinion or an observation easily flares into a topic that engenders hatred against individuals.

### ***I have not escaped unscathed.***

I had hoped that once the Wheeler concerts were fully subscribed, the abuse would have dissipated. **I was wrong.** There were underlying tensions throughout the tribute week, and they came to a head on 14<sup>th</sup> October when a well-respected tribute artist was abused whilst he was minding his own business in the John Denver Sanctuary. I am at odds to understand why a person would be so outraged over a personal opinion, that they would treat another human being in this disgusting manner.

In another incident, a newspaper article was pulled from the internet because of outrage against the subject of the article. Fortunately, I have a hard copy, which I will likely post in a later newsletter.

Getting back to Facebook, I saw a post where an adult was abused online for attending the ‘wrong’ concert. They apologised and said that they wouldn’t do it again. To me that is a case of severe bullying. For those who do not understand what **bullying** is, here is the definition: **to use superior strength or influence to intimidate (someone), typically to force them to do something.**

As recently as last week on a prominent Facebook group to which I belong, there was an outburst of hatred against another (different) tribute artist. So violently ugly were the comments, that I felt compelled to intervene and point out how abusive their comments were. I was told in no uncertain terms that ‘*Facebook is the forum for people to voice their opinions.*’ Whilst I agree that one can voice their opinions on Facebook, there is

a distinct difference between an opinion and abuse. According to the dictionary I use, an **opinion is a view or judgement formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.**

However, I perceived these comments as **abuse**, which is **to treat with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly.**

Moderators and administrators of Facebook groups and pages **MUST** be vigilant in scrutinising the comments **THEIR** members make because many of the comments became a personal attack on the individual.

Although the thread was removed by the moderator after 24 hours, the innocent victim endured untold abuse by strangers, or maybe even by people he considered his friends. Think about his parents, his siblings, his spouse, or his children who may have read those remarks. How do you think they would feel to think that their beloved family member was treated with so much disrespect? More importantly, **if you were in the same position, how would YOU feel?**

### **I am taking a stand against online bullying.**

*Higher Ground Australia* and *Janette Frawley* will not tolerate abusive comments made about any person or group of people on Facebook pages for which we are associated. The comments will be reported directly to Facebook in future.

There are many groups that do take care that the comments remain positive. I applaud the person who regularly reminds the users about comments, and has them removed when they are inappropriate. Whilst we can all take extra measures to ensure that the Facebook groups and pages remain positive, there are some that need to be cleaned up more than others.

If I have upset anyone with my comments, please don’t hesitate to ‘unfriend’ me from your groups or Facebook pages.

### **ONLINE BULLYING AND ABUSE. IT STOPS WITH ME.**

**“Peace is a conscious choice.”**

— John Denver



## **John Denver was Simply 'Far Out'**

Lorenzo Semple , Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2017 Aspen Daily News

It was one of John Denver's most famous sayings, and he delivered it with such conviction you couldn't help but smile. But you know what really is far out? John Denver is making a huge comeback. His songs have been in several movies this year, as well as performed live at country music awards shows. Why? Because they're good, and they're unique, that's why. In a homogenized world that sorely lacks original game, John Denver stands out now more than ever.

Aspen has an odd relationship with John Denver. Whenever his super-fans come to town for the annual John Denver celebratory weekend, they're constantly amazed, nearly to the point of insult, at how seemingly unperturbed the locals are by his legacy. Me, too. It's always been puzzling. How many locals attend the John Denver events? Those lucky enough to see him perform live probably get what the fuss is all about. He could make that big hollow-bodied 12-string really ring. If you're here for the celebration of his life, we genuinely hope you have a meaningful time connecting with the spirit.

Remember when they tried to change the name of Mount Sopris to "John Denver Peak"? My friend John Doyle said to me one of the wittiest things ever uttered, "Heck, we've been calling it that for years ..."

When we were kids, John Denver was a fairly regular fixture about town. It was a badge of honor to be the lucky kid who sold him a newspaper on Thursday afternoons after school. He was the guy who'd give you a dollar for a paper that cost 20 cents, or even sometimes, if you were really lucky, a \$5 bill.

He used to drive around in an AMC Eagle (cousin of the Pacer he drove in "Oh God"), a relatively peculiar, luxury SUV-type car with a bitchin' golden eagle sticker on the hood. But my favorite car of his was the gold 928 Porsche, with the big round back. And whenever he got out of it, he'd be wearing jeans, a shearling coat, his trademark floppy hat and those unmistakable round glasses. It was amusing; he almost cut the figure of a guy trying to look like John Denver.

There are some crazy folklore-esque stories floating around Aspen about John Denver. Some of them are even true. One of my favorites is the time a raving lunatic tried to set his house up in Starwood on fire. Rumor had it that John Denver had a large gasoline storage tank on his property, and the psychopath decided the best thing to do was to ignite it. They tried to accomplish this by setting a series of fires around his property to converge at the gas tank and got close, but thankfully the plot was foiled.

After perusing this year's schedule of events for the John Denver weekend, it was almost enough to get me to attend something — out of respect and admiration and, almost as much, out of curiosity. Music and concerts mostly fill the schedule, it seems, but there was one glaring absence: a screening of the 1977 film "Oh God," starring John Denver, Terri Garr and George Burns. What a screenplay. The movie has aged exceptionally well and is totally worth seeing again.

It's been a while, but the takeaway for me is what a good actor John Denver was. Not to mention the vivacious Garr in bell-bottoms and a tube top. The movie has every golden opportunity to skewer religion but stops just short, not plucking the temptingly low-hanging, ripe red apple from the tree of comedy. The movie inadvertently makes an excellent argument for and against religion. But the reason the film works so well is Denver. He's surprisingly convincing as Jerry, a normal everyday guy and extremely easy to relate to. If you haven't seen it, do yourself a favor. Movies that have a "message" are usually problematic (if you want to send a message, call Western Union), but "Oh God" is an exception to that rule. The takeaway is that everything will eventually turn out all right, and be nice to people.

The most fascinating chapter of the John Denver story for me was his desire to fly on the Space Shuttle Challenger. After his incessant lobbying, the powers that be decided the optics of a musician going into space would look bad, and they gave his seat to a schoolteacher. When the spacecraft exploded on live TV — one of the defining moments of our lives — John Denver was distraught with guilt. Right around that time, he was majorly dissed by not being invited to participate in the "We are the World" recording sessions. That still upsets me.

John Denver is everywhere in Aspen, but mostly in the mountains. Very few, if anyone, has ever been able to epitomize what it means to live in Colorado like he did. Some say he's making a big comeback, but for a lot of us locals — even if we don't show it — he never really went away.

[suityourself@sopris.net](mailto:suityourself@sopris.net)

<http://www.aspendailynews.com/section/columnist/176958>

### **Flashback Friday: Denver in Minnesota, Remembering Singer 20 Years After his Death**

October 13, 2017 Frank Rajkowski

Colorado is the state most usually associate with John Denver.

After all, the singer-songwriter celebrated the state he long called home in such hits as "Rocky Mountain High."

But Denver - who died at the age of 53 when an experimental airplane he was piloting crashed 20

years ago this week - also had long and deep ties to Minnesota.

That was largely due, of course, to his first wife Annie, whom he met while playing a concert at Gustavus as a member of The Mitchell Trio in 1966.

The two were married from 1967 to 1982, and made their home in Edina for a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s - just as Denver's career as a solo artist began to take off.

"He was very close to our family," recalls Annie's sister Teresa Martell, who still lives in Le Sueur.

"We spent a lot of time together at family gatherings. He was really close with my older brother Ben, who was just happy to add a brother to our family.

"He and Ben traveled together, and they had a lot of fun."

Annie was the daughter of Jim Martell, a World War II veteran who participated in the D-Day invasion before returning home and eventually opening the Holiday House supper club in St. Peter, which he owned for decades.

"He could type really well," recalls Teresa Martell of her father, who died at the age of 90 in 2014.

"He'd been a typist in the army. And one time, there were armed guards by his door when they asked him to type something up. It turned out it was the orders saying (the Allies) were going to invade Normandy on June 4th, 5th or 6th.

"We never knew that until much later."

Jim and his wife Norma had four children - Annie, Linda, Ben and Teresa - all of whom got to know Denver well.

"He was just such a nice guy," said Teresa, who added the family remained close to Denver, even after his marriage to Annie ended. "He loved the outdoors and he loved to golf. When we moved to Prior Lake, he loved water skiing with us, or playing badminton and volleyball. Things like that."

It was while living with Annie in Edina that Denver wrote some of his early songs like "Sunshine on My Shoulders." He was also tapped to perform at Edina High School during a student walk-out in September of 1969.

"Everybody has a different story about it," recalls Deb Nugent Stickley, a sophomore at the time.

"But initially, I think there was a teacher labor dispute going on. And one of the issues brought forth was cutting back on some extra-curricular activities. That's what students were protesting against."



So Denver, who was playing various locations around town at the time, was approached about coming in and playing for the students gathered in the high school gymnasium.

"He knew people at Edina High School, and so he came over and played a few songs, just to keep the troops calmed down if you will," said Nugent Stickley, who now lives in Georgia. "I had no idea who he was at the time. I don't think many people did. When he made it big, it was crazy to look back on. Here was this guy with a guitar who played at our high school protest.

"And he went on to become a mega-star."

A mega-star with a long connection to Minnesota. And those Minnesota ties are why Denver will be among the 2017 inductees to the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame - joining lesser-known acts like the Meire Grove City Band and Jim Johnson and the Underbeats.

An induction ceremony and banquet is scheduled for Nov. 3 at Turner Hall in New Ulm.

"A lot of the songs that brought him the most fame and notoriety were written here in Minnesota," Dodie Wendinger, hall of fame executive director, said. "It's where he met his wife and lived for a time. So he had extremely close ties to Minnesota.

"It's really where his career started out."

<http://kstp.com/news/flashback-friday-john-denver-minnesota-ties/4633265/>

### **Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers reveal why they never became a couple**

Oct. 26, 2017 Scott Stump

More than 30 years after they became the gold standard for country duet magic with their first song together, Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton will take the stage with each other one last time. Parton, 71, will join Rogers, 79, in Nashville Wednesday night when Rogers plays the final concert of his legendary 60-year career. Since they first released the No. 1 hit "Islands in the Stream" in 1983, Dolly and Kenny have become the definition of perfect duet partners.

Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton spoke with Dylan Dreyer about why they never became a couple as Rogers got set to play his final concert.

Dylan Dreyer spoke with both of them on TODAY Wednesday, getting to the bottom of why the duo that made beautiful music together never became a couple in real life.

"First of all, she's hard to look at for me," Rogers joked.

"I'm not his type," Parton joked.

Their friendship helped make songs like "Islands in the Stream," "Love is Strange," "Real Love," and "You Can't Make Old Friends" into some of country music's most enduring duets.

"I'm a believer that tension is better if you keep it than if you satisfy it," Rogers said. "And then secondly, she said no to me."

"Nah. You know what, we were almost like brother and sister," Parton replied. "And it would almost be like incest. So we just never went there."

From the moment Kenny and Dolly released their first song together in 1983, they became duet partners beloved by country music fans.

Their eagerly-anticipated duets will be part of Wednesday night's "All in for the Gambler" concert in Nashville as a legend says goodbye. Rogers, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, has sold more than 100 million albums worldwide and produced more than 120 hit singles.

"I don't know quite how I feel about it," Parton said. "I don't think I feel as scared and as empty as some of the fans do, because Kenny and I are friends, and I imagine that we can go visit and maybe once in a while light into a little bit of a song or two."

The two have maintained a friendship for decades as they both carved out incredible careers.

"We're really good friends," Parton said. "And we're so much alike. We know the same people. We laugh at the same kind of jokes. I tell jokes and I tell him not to tell that I told the joke."

A 2005 CMT poll declared "Islands in the Stream" the best country duet of all time, but Parton has her own personal favorite.

"I really love 'You Can't Make Old Friends,'" Parton said. "We love that because it's so personal to both of us. But we love all (Islands in the Stream). Like I say, you just come alive on that."

"I think the memories play a big part in 'Islands,'" Rogers said. "I think when you look back on anything, it's kind of the impact it had on you and your life at that time."

Rogers released "Islands in the Stream," which was written by the Bee Gees, on his 1983 album "Eyes That See in the Dark," and it became the second No. 1 hit for each of them.

"The story is the producer and the writer on the song was one of the Bee Gees, Barry Gibb," Rogers said. "And we had been singing this song in my studio in L.A. for four days. And I finally said, 'Barry, I don't even like this song anymore.' And he said, 'We need Dolly Parton.'"

It turned out that tracking down Parton for the duet didn't take long.

"I said, 'Well, why not, you know?'" Rogers said. "And Ken Kragen, my manager said, 'I saw her downstairs.' I said, 'Well, go get her.' And Dolly, in her inimitable fashion, marched into the room and the song was never the same."

<https://www.today.com/popculture/dolly-parton-kenny-rogers-reveal-why-they-never-became-couple-t117953>

**What does this article have to do with John Denver? Nothing! I was one of the fortunate**

**people who sat in the audience for the 'All for the Gambler' concert in Nashville. The atmosphere was electric as one after the other, country music stars current and past appeared on the stage and sang the songs the Kenny Rogers made famous. There were two exceptions, Kris Kristofferson, who sang 'Me and Bobby McGee' and Don Henley, who sang 'Desperado'. After the interval, Dolly and Kenny came out on stage together and sang 'You Can't Make Old Friends', followed by the beautiful and uplifting 'I will Always Love You', which was Dolly's tribute to Kenny. For me, although I didn't recognise every country star who came out on stage, it was a fitting and wonderful end to a very long career. If I had not have planned to go to AIO, I would not have had this incredible opportunity to be in the audience for this concert.**



### **20 Years Later, I still miss Henry (A piece of you may too).**

Bill Kerwood

His family knew him as Henry.

You know him as John.

In 1943, delivered a Deutschendorf.

In 1997, died a Denver.

A random day in 1973. I'm a 4-year-old bouncing in the passenger seat of my Dad's 18-wheeler on a narrow road after a long day. My heart jumps as the radio plays, "Take me home... to the place... I belong..." Same Scenario a year later. Dad & I belt another one out together over the diesel engine's roar, "Life on the farm is kind of laid back. Ain't nothin' a country boy like me can't hack. Early to rise. Early to the sack." 22-more years finds Dad & I a few rows from the stage singing with John Denver (and a few thousand others) at a live concert. The older I grew the

more deeply I identify with his lyrics like no one else's.

Fast forward to our wedding day and you would hear a less familiar ballad from John, *"Just to wake up each morning... to you by my side... Just to offer a prayer each day for you. For you, the best of my life, For you, for the rest of my life, for you alone, only for you."*

Countless times since, at least weekly, heading home from work, I'll sing along with or without John, *"There's a fire softly burning, The supper is on the stove, It's the light in your eyes that makes me warm... Hey, it's good to be back home again"*

If anyone wrote and sang the soundtrack for my life, it was John Denver.

Each year more details surface like a continual discovery of winding yet parallel tracks. A persistent revelation of the resonating lyrics in my youth were simply reflections of similar paths.

- A deep appreciation for all that creation offered, it's ruggedness, it's fragility, it's resilience, it's beauty.
- The allure of a good chord progression, paired with a simple melody and an alternating baseline.
- The joy of being rooted in generational thinking, doing what we can to make a difference, and leaving a legacy for our prodigy.
- The calling to be a champion of the environment, wildlife and the fascination of capturing it all with a camera lens.
- The eternally optimistic perspective that a live performance can infuse an audience towards a positive change.
- Performing for the sole reason of sharing all the joy we feel in living.
- Blissfully enjoying the magic & metaphor of expressing yourself through the love of flying.

Ultimately, John's excitement and exuberance to fly was a factor in his untimely passing.

People often ask me, "So, what really led to John's untimely death?"

1. He was an experienced pilot with multiple ratings in multiple planes.
2. His plane was a proven design created by world-renowned designer Burt Rutan.
3. His plane's well-intended builder included an improvement that was ultimately questioned.
4. This modification was a factor that led to similar emergency situations for the 2-previous owners.
5. The modification was a main factor in a series of decisions that led to John's incident.

I remain grateful for all that John Denver has contributed. What a privilege to live in an era where we can relive John Denver's musical & lyrical contributions instantly. As I celebrate John Denver's life today these thoughts streak through my mind like the Perseids. In sporadic poignant succession... Each followed by another...

- Today matters.
- Each moment matters.
- Each thought that guides each decision matters.
- Every decision we make matters.
- We are not promised tomorrow.
- One thought can minimize or even end our tomorrows.
- We are all dreamers and doers that live-out-loud, and that matters.
- Dot each "I", Cross every "T".
- Follow a master designer.
- Know and thrive in your own context.
- Give freely to others.
- Love with reckless abandon.
- Sing with all your heart, out loud & even off key.
- Freely and vulnerably share your love with others.
- Our thoughts and decisions affect our lifespan.
- The longer we stick around, the more time we resonate with those who enjoy us most.
- Recording our heart and our art, others can relive and enjoy... even after we pass.
- It's a great life,
- Celebrate it all.

*"I've been lately thinking about my life's time,  
All the things I've done, how it's been.  
The ways that it should be, The ways that it could be,*

*Things I'd do differently if I could do it all again"  
And I have to say it now,*

*It's been a good life all in all,*

*It's really fine to have a chance to hang around.*

*Lie there by the fire and watch the evening tire,  
While all my friends and my old lady sit and watch  
the sun go down.*

*How sweet it is to love someone,*

*How right it is to care.*

*All our dreams and the memories we share."*

*From "Poems Prayers & Promises*

*John Denver 12/31/43 – 10/12/97*

<http://www.billkerwood.com/20-years-later-henry-john-deutschedorf/>



## **Listen to John Denver's Unreleased Judy Collins Cover: Exclusive**

Gary Graff Billboard, November 11, 2017

Courtesy of the John Denver estate

The late singer's estate shares "The Blizzard" on 20th anniversary of his death.

The John Denver Estate is commemorating the 20th anniversary of the singer-songwriter's death with a gift for fans.

On Thursday (Oct. 12) the estate will release a previously unheard version of Judy Collins' "The Blizzard" via the official Denver website, digital retailers and streaming services. Denver recorded the song during the early '90s and even sent Collins a demo of his rendition, but never put it out before his unexpected death on Oct. 12, 1997.

"It's a very John Denver song," Brian Schwartz, director of the estate, tells Billboard. "We're honoring his music and his life by releasing this track that we found in the archives. We mixed it, we mastered it. John Denver fans are rabid. They're going to freak out when they hear this." And Schwartz adds there's likely more unreleased material where "The Blizzard" came from.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD8AoqfmjGQ>

"There's a few other (songs) we found in the same unearthing where we found 'The Blizzard,'" he confirms. "We didn't feel like we wanted to put those out yet. There's a few left, and we're continuing to digitize reels. Hopefully there will be more unreleased studio recordings." Schwartz adds that there's also a wealth of live recordings in the vaults, and that the estate is "working on some initiatives around those for 2018."

"The Blizzard" is among several Denver-released projects surfacing the balance of this year. A new compilation, *John Denver: The Windstar Greatest Hits*, is due out Dec. 1 on vinyl and online, with a blue vinyl version exclusively for *Cracker Barrel*. Additionally, an audiobook version of Denver's 1994 memoir *Take Me Home* is now on paperback and Kindle, while an exclusive *Audible.com* edition is read by Denver himself. The *Grammy Museum's Denver* exhibit has moved to the *Woody Guthrie Center* in Tulsa, Okla., while the Denver International Airport is hosting a Denver exhibition curated with the *Colorado Music Hall of Fame*.

"The overall message of the campaign is 'Remember John Denver,' and how we can curate his legacy," Schwartz explains. "How do we continue to satiate John's fan base and turn on new generations of folks and hopefully potential fans? That's what we do overall, basically 'What can we do that's special?' We try to make decisions based on how we perceive (Denver) would've made them. It's all about, 'How do we continue to remind people about him and his music?'"

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/country/7997493/john-denver-the-blizzard-judy-collins>

## **TRIBUTE ARTISTS**

*Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.*

(Judy Garland)

Many tribute artists have recently released new albums. The following are links to some of the tribute artists who have new CDs now available. The details for purchasing CDs are on the individual artist's web pages, as are their forthcoming performances.

### **Jimmy Fong**

Jimmy Fong's story was published in the Chinese newspaper in Malaysia today. This follows a successful series of concerts he performed a couple of months ago in his home town of Penang, Malaysia. Jimmy donated the proceeds of one of his concerts back to the school he attended to be used as a scholarship, providing a child with the means to further their music. The 20,000 RM will go a long way to provide an opportunity for a child that Jimmy himself didn't have when he was younger. Extending a hand to help those to fulfil their dreams is a wonderful gift to give. We fully support Jimmy with his future ventures.

<http://www.guangming.com.my/node/419076/6%E6%AD%B2%E5%AD%B8%E5%8F%A3%E7%90%B4-9%E6%AD%B2%E5%BD%88%E5%90%89%E4%BB%96-%E6%96%B9%E6%8C%AF%E8%B6%85%E5%BE%9E%E5%A4%A7%E9%A6%AC%E5%BD%88%E5%94%B1%E5%88%B0%E6%BE%B3%E6%B4%B2>

### **Mark Cormican**

*Christmas is Calling has been released, and is now available through Mark's website.*

<http://markcormican.com/>

### **Will Kruger**

*Snow Angels* is a beautiful Christmas song by Will Kruger, and available on his website.

<http://www.willkruger.com/cdbaby.htm>

### **Cathy Gianfala Carriere**

*Christmas* has been released and is available through Cathy's website. The CD will be formally launched over the next two weeks.

**Sat. Dec 2nd** Concert & CD Signing, 1-3 pm at Mule's Store, Metairie

**Sun. Dec. 10th** CD Release Party & Concert, 12 Noon at Peaches Records, New Orleans

**Tues. Dec 12th** Concert 7:00 pm at East Bank Regional Library, Metairie

**Sat. Dec. 16th** Concert 7-8 pm at Clearview Mall, Metairie



<http://www.cathygianfalacarriere.com/>  
<https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/cathygianfalacarriere>  
[3](#)

### **Chris Liebig**

Chris's new album, Hamburg – Aspen will be released on the 6<sup>th</sup> December. Details are on his website.

<http://www.chrisliebig.band/index/>

### **Jason Owen**

Australia's Jason Owen was interviewed on Willie's show a couple of weeks ago. His new album is available from iTunes and Spotify. Check out his website for details.

<http://jasonowenofficial.com/>

### **Jim Curry**

Jim Curry's *A Rocky Mountain Christmas* Show is in full swing. Check out his website to see whether he is coming to a town near you.

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

### **Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon**

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon's new CD *Christmas in the Canyon*, will be released on December 5. Check out their website for more information about pre-ordering and also their forthcoming concerts.

<https://bouldercanyonband.com/merchandise>

### **Ted Vigil**

Ted is currently touring. Check his website to see if he is coming to a town near you.

<http://www.tedvigil.com/calendar.html>

### **Tom Becker**

Tom Becker's *Back Home Again- A Tribute to John Denver* will be formed on **October 6** at the *Wildlife Center of Virginia*. Click the link for details and tickets

[https://www.wildlifecenter.org/news\\_events/events/back-home-again-tribute-john-denver](https://www.wildlifecenter.org/news_events/events/back-home-again-tribute-john-denver)

Tom is a former member of the *The New Christy Minstrels*.

He recently had his show recorded for PBS. you can view the show here on his website.

[www.johndenvertribute.net](http://www.johndenvertribute.net)

### **Chris Westfall**

Check out Chris' website. Chris performs his own interpretations to the music of John Denver and others.

<http://www.chriswestfall.com/home.html>

### **American Veterans Radio**

American Veterans Radio is honored to feature the wonderful music of John Denver. Please join Willie from Dillon on his regular Music of John Denver radio show. Here is a link to the podcast of the last show.

<http://www.avradio.org/rewind---podcasts.html>

**The next newsletter should be released before Christmas!**

Some material included in this newsletter has been derived from the public domain, such as the internet and printed media. Articles and reviews are the opinion of the individual writer and as long as the content is of a reasonable nature and it is appropriate, it will be included. Organisations mentioned or featured in this newsletter are included to educate and inform people of their role and purpose. HGA does not profit from including the names of any organisation in this newsletter.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.



## The Peace Poem

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

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

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

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

