

# ASPEN IN OCTOBER

October 2017 Issue: 01

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20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication



**HIGHER GROUND AUSTRALIA**  
THE AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF JOHN DENVER

Country roads... Take me home... to the place I belong



# EDITOR'S LETTER

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

The first Aspen in October came exactly one year after the tragic death of John Denver on October 12, 1997, when his band members and friends got together to put on a concert in his memory. There was a huge outpouring of love of his music, which probably gave fans and visitors alike, an understanding of why John Denver wrote many songs about his home in Colorado. Twenty years on, the annual Aspen in October event is as much about friendship as it is about the music.

I became involved in Higher Ground Australia in 2001, when I was asked to take over the management of the fledgling group, which started the prior year. The HGA tribute was never meant to be a large event; rather an informal gathering of people who wanted to celebrate the life of John Denver through music. Based on the Aspen campfire concept, the main activity of our annual weekends is the singalong, with or (mostly) without the campfire. Each year we plant a tree in memory of John Denver and we raise money through silent auctions and raffles for raptor rehabilitation. Over the years, we have established ourselves as a group who is seriously interested in keeping the memory and music of John Denver alive, through newsletters and social media, and through our ongoing support of many tribute artists.

This magazine is the result of a project by writing and design students of Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia. The students, who have done all the design work for this publication have taken the Aspen in October theme seriously, and have produced a beautiful magazine. The articles, written by you, provide the readers with a snapshot of Aspen in October as a musical and personal experience.

This year's Aspen in October is going to be special. The programme of events includes a variety of well-known and well-loved artists and musicians. There are many concerts to choose from, some of which are already fully-subscribed. Aspen in October, for me, means beautiful mountain scenery, autumn colours, azure blue sky, and hopefully a snow day, catching up with friends, attending a full programme of concerts, and maybe dodging a bear or two.

See you all in Aspen!

**Janette Frawley**

May 16, 2017

Higher Ground Australia

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## A Star fell from the Sky

*Alistair Wilson October 16, 1997*

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All alone in your mountain home  
With reflections of happier days  
You wouldn't admit you were sad at times  
Yet it was clear in so many ways

Every song you sang was from the heart  
Every word was so sincere  
You made us feel that we were part  
Of a word of hope not fear

In and out of love  
Left with all the pain  
Your heart could not be broken  
You'd search for love again

Now tears are easy to come by  
And tears are all I can find  
Never again to shake your hand  
Never get you out of my mind

In the wilderness of Alaska  
Or the Rockies proud and high  
Far across the oceans  
The songs you sang will fly

For the singer and the cowboy  
The pilot and the friend  
Will remain always in our hearts  
There will never be an end

Release the bird and let him be free to fly  
Leave the problems and troubles behind  
Today a star fell from the sky  
But still shines for the good of mankind

## Aspen in October

*Christine Moon, Truro, Cornwall, UK, March 20, 2017*

Thanks to the internet, in the days and weeks of disbelief and grief after John Denver was lost to us, I was able to connect with other broken-hearted fans around the world. I knew I was not alone. When I learned of plans for a gathering and celebration of John's life, to be held in Aspen around the first anniversary of his passing, I knew I had to be there.

It was an emotional time for us all and many tears were shed, not least when John's voice unexpectedly rang out, to a gasp from the entire audience, in the Wheeler Opera House as Chris Nole played For You on the piano. Several members of John's family were present at this and other events, including his mother Erma, who was to attend annually until her own death.

In addition to the annual concerts at the Wheeler featuring some of John's former band members accompanying various singers, for the first ten years there was an all-day event at the Mountain Chalet, with music, a buffet lunch, and various memorabilia on sale and for auction. There was a new tee-shirt design each year, together with teddy bears and other soft toys wearing tee-shirts with John's picture and/or quotes from his songs and speeches. The annual campfire tradition began quietly the first year, but quickly became an important part of the celebration, based as it was on remarks John had made on a talk show about wanting people to share songs and stories

about him around a campfire when he was gone. As the years passed various other activities came and went. The Peace Cloth events, Windstar Open House, Tapestry in Aspen, Christopher Canyon's wonderful picture books featuring John's songs, Dreux's photo walks, the Snowmass Chapel memorial service and brunch, the Tower Restaurant dinner, the highway clean-ups...

For me personally, long evenings of music and fellowship in the Mountain Chalet lobby have long been a highlight of the Aspen in October experience. It's a once a year opportunity to socialise with so many others who feel as I do about the great John Denver. I also very much enjoy the small, intimate concerts around Aspen performed by some great singers who do such a great job in keeping John's music alive.

As the years have gone by many friendships have formed, couples have met and married, and sadly several regular participants, including two of John's former band members, are no longer with us and are sadly missed.

There have been many changes to the annual Aspen gathering since it began in the sad aftermath of our loss of John Denver. Today it is a happy time of renewing old friendships, making new ones, and celebrating the life of the man who brought us all together through his music. Long may it continue!





## The Main Thing

*Steve Weisberg, December 22, 2010*

I've put this off so long because I really wanted to say it right. I've now given up on that, and I just want to ramble on a bit, ad lib, and get this out before Christmas. What happened in Aspen this past October changed my life forever. This was an experience unlike any I've had. I'd always had a very hard time believing that our music actually impacted so many people. This outlook was forged by several attitudes; one was that we were simply 'playing' music, not 'working', and therefore it was to be taken lightly. Another reason was undoubtedly a simple case of 'I'm not worthy'. Of all that praise. All that applause. Add to that that I was really just a kid, emotionally less mature than our average listener (I valued wit

over wisdom, heat over warmth). Whoever said it's a pity youth is wasted on the young had my number. So as we travelled the globe to adoring fans, I just never understood what the big deal was. That admission is my little testimonial to the fact that I'm usually the last one to know most things.

I had an awakening just before Aspen, when I was told that the fans now went there as much to see each other as for the concerts. It finally dawned on me that I'd had a hand in something that truly did bring people together. I'd been told this forever, but was always so hesitant to believe it. So 35 years later, they proved it to me in the most unassuming ways, via my little semi-private events in my hotel room. People from all over the world just came in and chatted with me; telling stories of where they were first time they heard a song ... telling me why it was so meaningful. So it was 'the fans' who finally helped me make sense of those years gone by, and why they still resound. By befriending people like your own Ray and Dianne Dunk, I finally began to understand the real power of music. We joked, we hung out. We'll be friends for life. All because we are truly... just the same. John knew it and sang about it. I wanted to believe it, but just got proof month before last.

This October I finally got off the pedestal, and joined those who never (ever) let go of what we played so long ago. What I

discovered was that I'd craved being part of a bigger family, as an insider, with their permission and acceptance. This year I was hardly concerned with being on stage. My real need was to finally begin joining this global family, rather than merely playing to it through that invisible barrier between performer and audience. I wanted to actually begin knowing who they were, so I could hear from them why they were so attached to and by these simple songs. Mind you, I've never met a performer who didn't like that invisible curtain. I still do, but only from onstage, which comprises only a small part of my human experience. I now know that performing (which I'll always do) is far less fulfilling than performing and then... just 'being among people'. As you laugh and hug your families and friends this holiday season, you'll be feeling exactly what I felt with people who'd always been strangers before. I wish I'd discovered this earlier, but it's never too late to expand my world, by letting people closer. What I got in Aspen was something I'd never have wanted 'back in the day'. I now, suddenly, wanted to let people from all over get to know who I really am, beyond my role as musician. I wanted to finally join the human race, as a commoner, using John's fans as my pivot-point. I've always been grateful for the career, the money, the special status, etc.... which has been granted to me by being so closely linked with John. But now I'm beginning to be the

beneficiary of something much richer; of being simply a common guy who had an uncommon gig.

Thanks to a few dozen people in Aspen, I now finally realise that the biggest gift we ever receive is to simply... be human. I usually do have a way with words, but the experience I had is apparently beyond my ability to describe it. It was too emotional for words. It was, at 61, through the help of friends I met, my first real involvement in just being a happy member of the human race. Janette, I really promise to hone my literary style before my next letter! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Steve Weisberg December 22, 2010 "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing".

## An Interview with Jimmy Fong



**Jimmy Fong** is a talented singer-songwriter, well-known within the Melbourne folk-music scene. Originally from Penang, Malaysia, Jimmy is a natural storyteller. His willingness to share the experiences of his life in Malaysia and Australia and his innate talent for weaving his personal stories and songs together culminate in performances that are truly inspirational. Here is a recent telephone interview I conducted with Jimmy.

**Janette:** Hi Jimmy and thanks for talking to me today. Jimmy, you've had an interesting life to date and I'd like to touch briefly on a few significant events, which have undoubtedly influenced your music.

**Jimmy:** Thanks for the opportunity to talk to you. I've got a couple of special events coming up soon, and this is a good chance to talk



about my music. Where do you want me to start?

**Janette:** Give some background information first.

**Jimmy:** I was born in Penang, Malaysia of Chinese parents. When I was nine, a State of Emergency was declared in Malaysia. A curfew was put into place and my life was severely restricted. I wasn't allowed to go outside to play and I couldn't go to school. For a nine-year-old boy, life was very boring. I was fiddling with the radio dial one day, when I came across a music station. I later found out it was broadcast by the Royal Australian Air Force in nearby Butterworth. This changed my life. From that day on, I listened to and then started to sing along with the songs as they were being played. Those songs also taught me how to speak English.

**Janette:** When did you learn to play the guitar?

**Jimmy:** My auntie lent me a guitar around the same time. I have to tell you a funny story. The radio station didn't have that many music records, so I'd hear the same songs a few times each day. There were no cassette recorders, so in order to learn a song, I would learn what I could when the song played for the first time that day, then wait until the next time it was played to try to fill in the bits I didn't get the first time, like this;

*[Jimmy picks up his guitar and plucks out a riff. All the leaves are brow-n, and the skies are grey.....Sweet Caroline.... Baa, baa, baa, good times never seemed so good....Country roads, take me home, to the place, I belong.....]*

**Jimmy:** You get what I mean?

**Janette:** I do [laughs]. What happened next?

**Jimmy:** I sort of got very interested in John Denver's music. Country Roads was the first song I really learnt. There were a lot of John Denver songs being played on the radio then.

When the curfew ended after 730 days, I was a self-taught musician. I then took classical guitar lessons to refine my skills. When I was about 16-years-old, I got a job in a local pub as a singer. One night a bunch of guys from Butterworth came into the pub and after listening for a while, walked over and asked me where I'd learned all the songs. I told them that they'd taught me not only the songs, but to speak English through their radio station.

**Janette:** Jimmy, fast-forward to 1994.

**Jimmy:** After meeting my wife, Julie, migrating to Australia, and having two

proudly presents

# Jimmy Fong's

## "My Time with John Denver"

7:30 p.m.  
Sat., October 14, 2017

Aspen Community Church  
200 E. Bleeker Street  
Aspen, CO  
\$35 general admission

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**  
[www.rockymountainfpa.org](http://www.rockymountainfpa.org)

A portion of the proceeds benefits the Rocky Mountain Foundation for



which is a fortnightly show hosted by Willie Hoevers, who had invited me to Aspen. I also was involved in the nightly informal jam sessions in the foyer of the Mountain Chalet hotel, and I was invited to perform on numerous occasions with other tribute artists, one of whom was Jim Connor. Jim wrote one of John Denver's best-loved songs, *Grandma's Feather Bed*. He is from Alabama and plays the banjo and is a real character. Performing with Jim was a joy, an experience I will never forget, especially when he asked me to sing a verse in Chinese.

**Janette:** That video is on the internet and is extremely funny. With your permission, I would like to include the link in this interview so others can enjoy that performance: <https://www.facebook.com/217738491683359/videos/357350981055442/>. What did you think about Aspen and the surrounding area?

**Jimmy:** I don't think most people realise that Aspen is situated in one of the most beautiful places in the world. As a songwriter, I was overwhelmed with the spectacular scenery. I was lucky enough to be taken up to Starwood, the entrance to the gated community, where John Denver's house is situated. Of course, I was not allowed to enter, but as the car turned around and it started its way down the mountain, I caught sight of the four-lane below.

beautiful daughters, I decided to move my family back to Penang. Early one morning, my brother burst into our house yelling for me to get out of bed. He worked for the Sultan of Kedah, the Malaysian King at the time. The King, a keen golfer and John Denver fan had invited John, who was touring Malaysia at the time, to the palace to open a new private golf fairway. I was invited to come to the palace, not only to meet, but to perform with John Denver.

**Janette:** This is a stupid question, I know. How did you feel?

**Jimmy:** At first I was nervous, but we had a chat, a few jokes, and he put me at ease. We talked about family and music. He was one of the nicest guys I've ever met, and he inspired me to continue with not only singing, but with writing songs. I was devastated when he died.

**Janette:** You returned to Melbourne with your family and continued writing songs and performing. You have recorded a couple of CDs,

the most recent one in 2015, just ahead of your *My Time with John Denver* shows in August of that year. That was also a significant year for another reason. Do you want to talk about that?

**Jimmy:** Yes. I was invited to do two shows in America in October of 2015. The first one was in Aspen, Colorado for the annual *Aspen in October* tribute week. I was also invited to do the *My Time with John Denver* show at the Kimo Theatre, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Janette:** John Denver lived in Aspen, Colorado from the 1970s. During the *Aspen in October* week, a number of musicians arrive to take part in the tribute week, some of whom actually performed with John Denver over the years. Can you tell me about some of the places you visited and people you met in 2015?

**Jimmy:** I'd one scheduled concert, and I was asked to perform live for the American Veteran's Radio Presents *The Music of John Denver* programme,





*[Jimmy picks up the guitar:  
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 so away  
The whinin' of his wheels just makes it colder]*

I was, at that moment, able to directly relate to the songwriter's point of view because what John Denver wrote in the lyrics of *Back Home Again* was exactly what I was looking at – a mile or so away. When I sing it during my concerts, I visualise that scene every time. Somehow it feels very close to me.

**Janette:** As a songwriter, you are probably very sensitive to your physical surroundings.

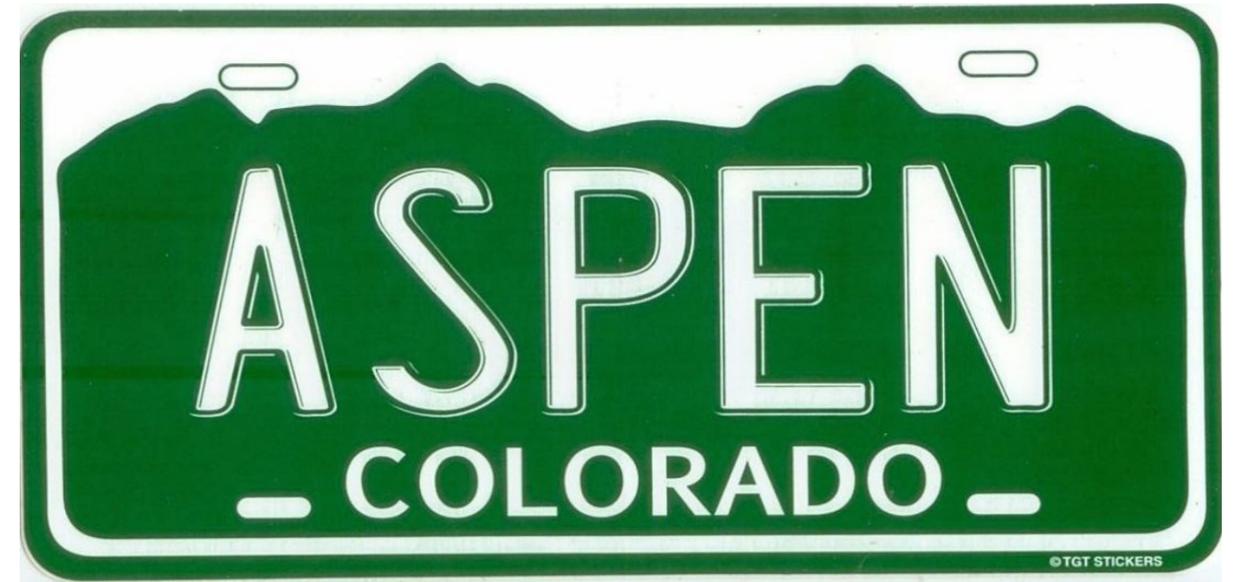
**Jimmy:** Yes. I also went to the Maroon Bells State Park. It's meant to be one of John Denver's favourite places to hike. I took a walk along one of the tracks and was blown away with the beauty of the place. The lake with the two bell-shaped

mountains behind. The word, breathtaking, is the only way to describe this high-altitude scenic wonder. Aspen has left a deep impression on me, and I think that it's provided me with an insight into many of John Denver's lyrics.

**Janette:** You mentioned concerts earlier on in this interview. What is coming up for you in the near future?

**Jimmy:** I've been invited to return to Aspen this October. I've a concert scheduled for Saturday, 14th October at the Aspen Community Church, [<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>]. I'm also performing with Susan Kay Burke on Friday 13th October at 12pm at the Mountain Chalet. For more information, [[www.hgavic.com/aio](http://www.hgavic.com/aio)]. My two CDs are also available for sale through my website: [[www.jimmyfong.net](http://www.jimmyfong.net)].

**Janette:** Thanks Jimmy. I will include the links for ticket sales and for your website for anyone who is interested in attending. I really appreciate the time you've given me today. Good luck and I'll see you in Aspen in October.



## In Anticipation of Aspen

March 21, 2017 by Terry Seemann, Chicago, Illinois

I had been a big John Denver fan in the 70s. I saw him in concert several times and was thrilled whenever he was on TV, be it on his own specials or as a guest on other shows. Then came that tragic day in October of 1997. I couldn't believe it when I woke up and heard the news on the radio. The years went by, John's music got played less and less on the radio and I got interested in other artists.

Jump ahead 12 years and I joined the Facebook boom. Soon I discovered that there were several John Denver groups on Facebook and began to join them. I was amazed to discover that there were so many people all over the world who still enjoyed his music and kept his spirit alive. I began listening to John's recordings again and have viewed countless videos on YouTube. I learned about the Sanctuary that was developed in Aspen and the Spirit statue. And then I found out about Aspen in October, which has been held in John's honour every year since his death. I had no idea that any of these things existed until I started to use Facebook. For the last couple of years, I have enjoyed all the pictures and stories from people who have attended AIO and have wanted to attend the celebration.

Realising that this year was the 20th anniversary of John's death, I decided this was the year I was going to attend the celebration in Aspen. I can't wait to finally experience what I have been reading about for the last several years. Looking at all the activities planned so far, I want to attend everything, but am trying to limit myself to leave some time to enjoy the city of Aspen.

I definitely want to see the Sanctuary so intend to join the Meet and Greet event. I also want to attend the All My Memories gathering and have signed up for the Rhymes & Reasons, Susan Kay Burke concert and luncheon and the 20th Anniversary Tribute so far. I'm sure I'll also join in on some of the sing-a-longs at the Mountain Chalet.

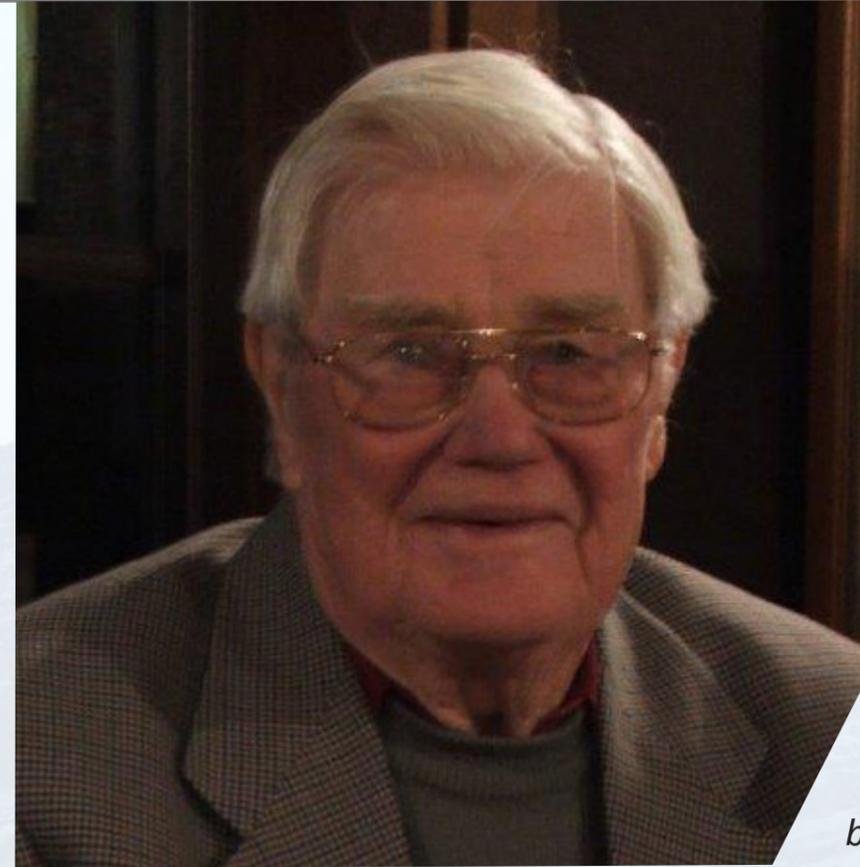
Another thing I would love to do is fly into Denver the day before AIO begins and see the Spirit statue and the John Denver Museum and gift shop at Red Rocks. I'm hoping I can make that work. Even if I can't though, I am so looking forward to seeing the city that John Denver fell in love with and meeting many of the people in person who I have 'met' through Facebook who appreciate John's music and values as much as I do.

## The Call of the Mountain

Janet Louise Mancini, October, 2016

"I was inspired to write this poem after reading John's Book, It's about Time".

The call of the mountain,  
That's where I want to go,  
It's beauty and splendour,  
Have much for us to know.  
Have you been to the top,  
Where you can see Heaven and Earth?  
The majestic peaks speak,  
Of such magnificent mirth.  
The snow on the mountain,  
Untouched by man,  
What beauty inspires me,  
To write of this land.  
Land that was given,  
As a gift from above  
By the creator Himself  
To be cared for and loved.



## Some days are Diamonds

In memory of Max Moore,  
by Alistair Wilson, April 12, 2017

I first learned of Max when his book *Some days are Diamonds* was released in 2003. One of the chapters, *Rocky Mountain High*, was devoted entirely to John Denver. My wife Carmel and I, were, and still are, John Denver fans.

We were members of a John Denver group of likeminded people who gathered for a weekend of celebration on the anniversary of his death on or near October 12th each year. We called ourselves *Higher Ground Australia*. We first met in Victoria in 2001 and each year we planted a tree, laid a plaque and read shared letters from fans from all around the world.

Driving home from the 2003 gathering, I decided to write to Max Moore to ask him for a letter to read out at our next gathering, which was to be held in Boonah, Queensland.

I wrote to him around May 2004 but didn't receive a reply, so I tried once more in July. This time I received an apologetic phone call from him. He explained that his wife had sadly passed away in May, but when he received the second letter he had more time to consider my request. He wanted to know what we were about and how I thought he could help, I asked him for a letter to read out at our next gathering in Boonah in October. Without hesitation he said he would like to join us.

Our whole group was so excited at the prospect of having someone among us who actually knew John Denver and would have many stories to tell about the times he shared with him. Max was treated like royalty that year, and every year thereafter.

Max's story begins back in December 1954 when he accepted a job with the American promoter, Lee Gordon. Lee had found a way to bring popular American artists out to Australia and pack crowds into Stadiums to see them perform. His fortunes rose and fell with the popularity of each artist he toured. Max was to check the ticket sales each night, count and bank the takings of each show. He soon earned Lee's trust and began touring and managing the shows himself.

Lee promoted Big Shows which included many rock-and-roll acts from USA, and he also gave some young Australian artists a chance to appear on the same programs. These wonderful shows sadly ended when Lee Gordon passed away in London on November 6, 1963. But the Australian rock-and-roll scene he began and the local artists he promoted began to branch out into the suburbs and interstate. They soon required a tour manager and Max Moore fit the bill.

One of the acts was *Col Joye and the Joyboys*. Max toured them all over Australia and for sixteen years he organised a train to tour Queensland,

fondly referred to as the *Insane Train*. The pianist in the band was Col Joye's brother, Kevin Jacobson, who himself became a promoter and brought well-known acts into Australia. Once again Max was given the tour manager position.

One of the most popular performers at that time was John Denver. Kevin invited him to tour Down Under and Max was appointed his Australian tour manager. The two immediately hit it off and became great friends. Max's schedules were always well-planned and John had lots of down-time in between shows. John and Max became so close that John would not tour Australia unless Max was his tour manager. Max took great pride in the fact John introduced him to his friends as his Australian Dad.

On one occasion in between shows Max and John were enjoying an evening meal together and exchanging stories about the early days of rock-and-roll. Max, always the storyteller, was telling John about his early touring days throughout the country. John suggested that he should write a book and went as far as volunteering to write the foreword for him. In the spirit of the moment Max said,

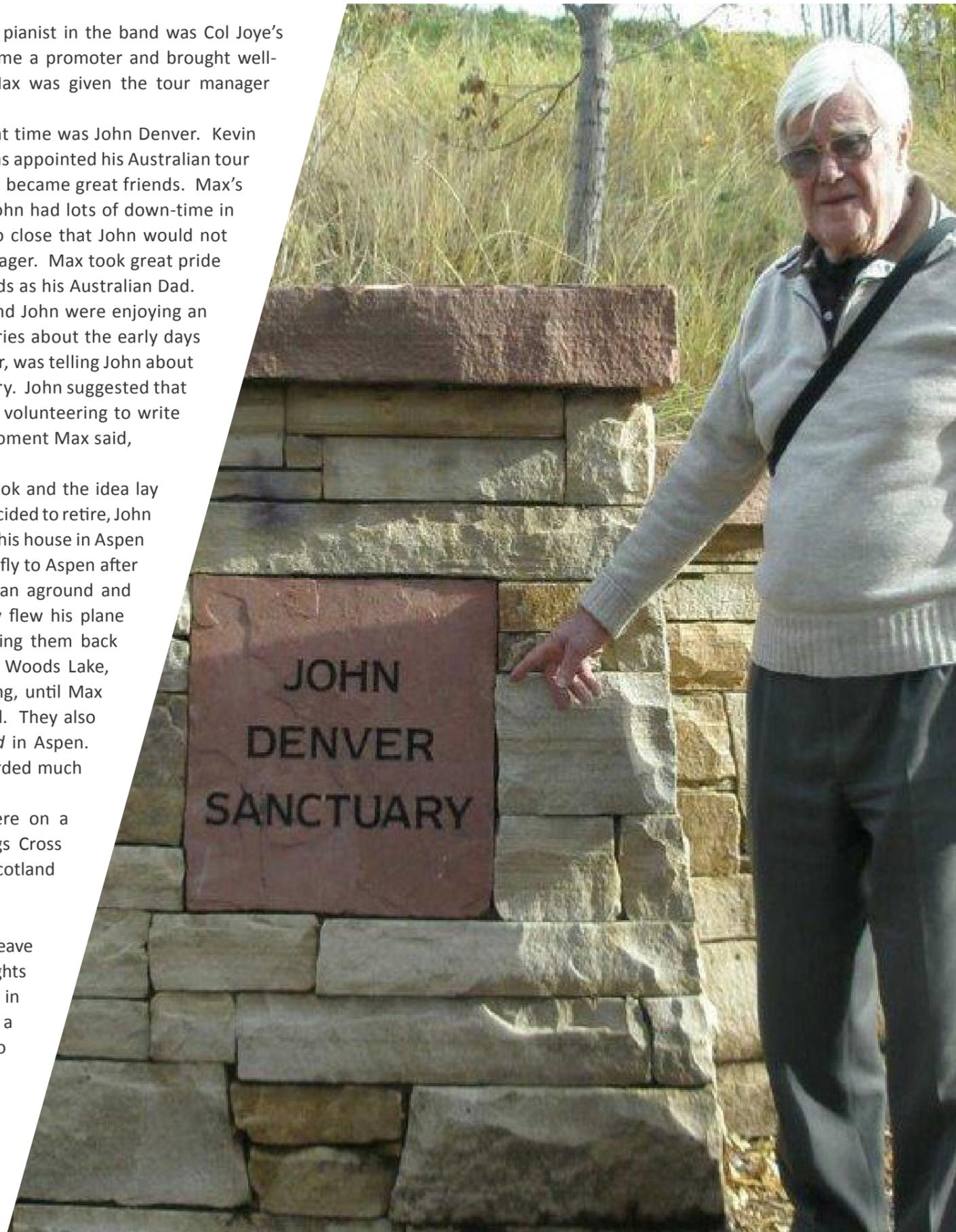
'Okay, I'll do it.'

Max did not seriously consider writing a book and the idea lay dormant for years. When Max reluctantly decided to retire, John invited him and Meryl, Max's wife, to stay in his house in Aspen for a holiday. Max accepted and planned to fly to Aspen after an Alaskan cruise. When the cruise ship ran aground and the cruise was abandoned, John personally flew his plane to Seattle to collect Max and Meryl, bringing them back to Aspen. John took them to his cabin at Woods Lake, where they spent an idyllic afternoon fishing, until Max dropped a brand-new fishing rod overboard. They also spent some time at John's home, *Starwood* in Aspen. Max, armed with a new video camera recorded much of this holiday.

On October 12, 1997, Max and Meryl were on a holiday in the UK. Max had gone to Kings Cross Station to purchase tickets to take them to Scotland when he heard a paper boy cry out

'John Denver dead in air crash!'

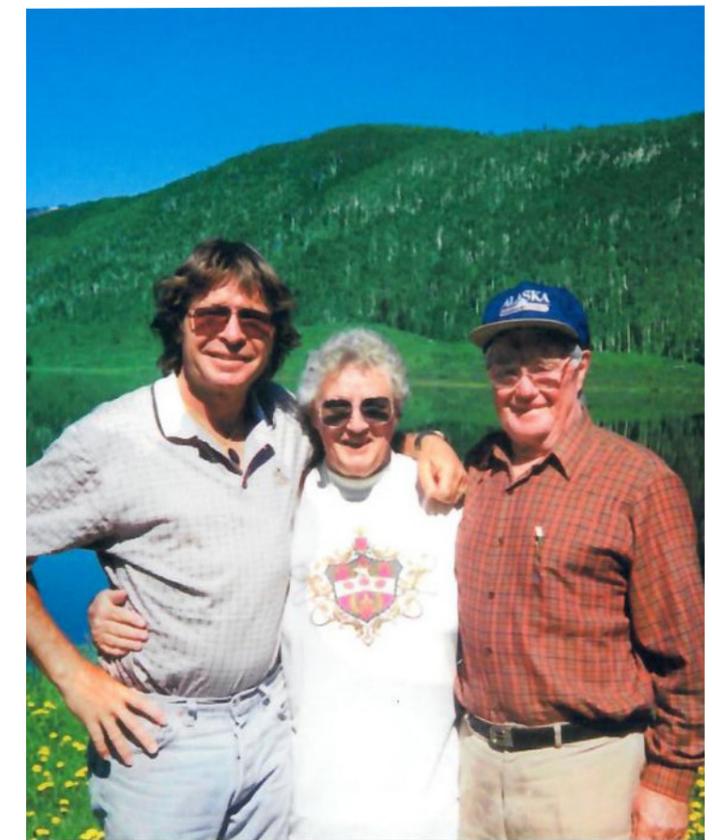
Max and Meryl were so upset they didn't leave their hotel room for two days. Max's thoughts reflected back to the conversation with John in Australia when he suggested that Max write a book. Since John would no longer be able to write the foreword as he had promised, Max devoted the book's prologue to his friend, John Denver. Max's book *Some days are Diamonds* was published by New Holland Australia publishers, and was released for sale in 2003.



In 2007, a group of Higher Ground Australia members travelled to Aspen for the 10th anniversary tribute. Max, at 84-years-old joined them, and he had a wonderful time meeting old friends and musicians from John's touring days. At an evening gathering in Aspen he was given the honour of lighting the campfire, and his warm nature and stories enchanted the devoted fans.

In 2011, Max organised the annual Higher Ground Australia tribute weekend near his family home in Bowral. His health deteriorated over the course of the year, but he was determined to attend this very special weekend, as he had invited some of his old rock-and-roll family to attend as well. They didn't let him down as they had spent a lot of time with John Denver during his many tours. Col Joye, his brother Keith, their sister Carol, her husband Sandy Scott, and many members of the music business who had been touched by Max over the years not only attended, but regaled us with their stories of John's visits to Australia. Col quickly penned a song for Max and sang it during our tree-planting ceremony.

Max passed away peacefully on December 26, 2011.



With John at

## For Max

*Alistair Wilson, October 10, 2004*

---

They say that friends are everything  
And good ones hard to find  
So we hope that you will stay a friend to us  
That's why John found you to be so kind

We all gather now for friendship sake  
As well as our need to meet  
Our paths have crossed several times before  
In many a different street

Slowly but surely our numbers are growing  
With friends from different states  
All with a bonding love for John's lifetime of music  
And we've all become great mates

Max, to be a friend is one thing  
But it's wonderful to be held in such high regard  
By a good friend half a world away  
Who called you his "Australian Dad"

For as much as one door sadly closed in your life  
I hope another has opened while you were with us here  
And you will remain our friend, and join with us  
At Batemans Bay next year

Max, you have no idea what it has meant to us  
To have you here at Boonah  
You've truly been an inspiration to everyone  
I wish we had met you sooner!!

Good health and good luck, mate, see you next year!!

## 'It's About Time'

*Here we are, still strong 20 years later*

---

March 21, 2017 Theresa Shea tree1a@aol.com  
and Sandra Clark tybrenn@comcast.net

In October of 1997, Henry John Deutschendorf Jr., known to many as John Denver, died in an aviation accident. Our world was changed forever. News of his passing travelled quickly around the world. Using the power of the internet and a new website, three ladies in Massachusetts named Theresa, Marcelle, and Sandra decided to gather some friends who shared their love of John Denver. Through online discussions it was decided, in honour of John, to try to have a memorial on the same day in every state [of USA]. Our service was conducted in a little church in the town of Walpole, MA and we invited some friends. Dozens of people gathered to tell stories and make some beautiful music together. Our group, "It's About Time" - The World Family Vision of John Denver was born. The name was taken from one of John's songs. In this song he tells us that it's about time we begin to turn the world around and it's about us doing it together.

*It's about time we begin it, to turn the world around. It's about time we start to make it, the dream we've always known.*

We quickly grew to an international group of friends who share a common goal - to keep the memory of John Denver alive through his music and through supporting the causes in which he believed. Through our Facebook group page we

try to reaffirm our commitment to making the world a better place and to spread John Denver's messages of peace and being pro-environment. We try to protect and honour John Denver's memory. Our ultimate goal is to keep spreading these messages to the next generation so that John's legacy will live on and his music will continue to be heard.

Over the past 20 years, members have shared poems, stories and events through over 100 newsletters. We created three very popular digital cookbooks with members' recipes that were sold as fundraisers to support some of John's charities. We supported the John Denver Peace Cloth during its evolution and many of our members have contributed their talents to the many panels that make up the Peace Cloth. We still maintain the original website that now resides at [<http://www.iat.swanseamass.org/>] We also have a very active Facebook group [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1454679788168133/>], which currently has over 300 members. Our members still share their favourite memories of John as well as the ways they keep his legacy alive through their own works and deeds.

Come join us and share your memories and ideas!  
We'd love to meet you!

# A Matter of Faith – Cathy Gianfala Carriere

Christine Bordelon. Published Tuesday 1st July, 2014

Clarion Herald, New Orleans, USA

Music has been a driving force in Cathy Gianfala Carriere's life since birth. Coming from a musical family, she remembers her first performance on stage at age 5 with her father's band, then progressing to Catholic church choirs and studying voice at Loyola University and classical guitar.

But Gianfala Carriere never really aspired to become a chart-topping singer. She was content singing for God.

"Since high school I've been doing this," she said about her 41 years as a liturgical musician for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. "It's a service to others. It's a ministry. I am not about seeking awards or fame but using the gifts that God gave me for others."

Her musical talents and songs from the recently released CD "A Matter of Faith" will be showcased in a free concert July 13 at 5 p.m. at Parkway Presbyterian Church, 6200 Camphor St., Metairie. That CD, along with her 2012 "Love Song: A Tribute to John Denver," and her debut album, "Medjugorje: A Call to Peace," will be available. A portion of the proceeds from "A Matter of Faith" benefits pro-life causes through a cloistered order in New York.

For the past 17 years, she's cantored at St. Benilde Church in Metairie. Prior to that, she had led music at St. Louis King of France – where she began as a teen choir member directed by then-Father Gary Ault of the prolific Dameans musical group fame – and at St. Clement of Rome and Holy Name of Jesus.

"That's where it really began in church ministry," she said. "As a cantor, I found it a good way to use my classical training."

## John Denver's inspiration

A dream in 2000 about singing with deceased singer John Denver planted a new musical seed in Gianfala Carriere. She awoke, penning words

to a John Denver tribute song, not knowing why, other than fortifying her admiration for the singer who had died in a 1997 plane crash.

"I think he was one of the greatest singer songwriters of our time," she said, adding how "Take Me Home Country Roads" hooked her. "I fell in love with his unique voice and his style. I was drawn to his music because a lot of his music is very spiritual."

Nine years after writing the Denver tribute, the lyrics resurfaced as she was energized – after a retreat – to write new Christian music. She grabbed her guitar and within 10 minutes had music written to it.

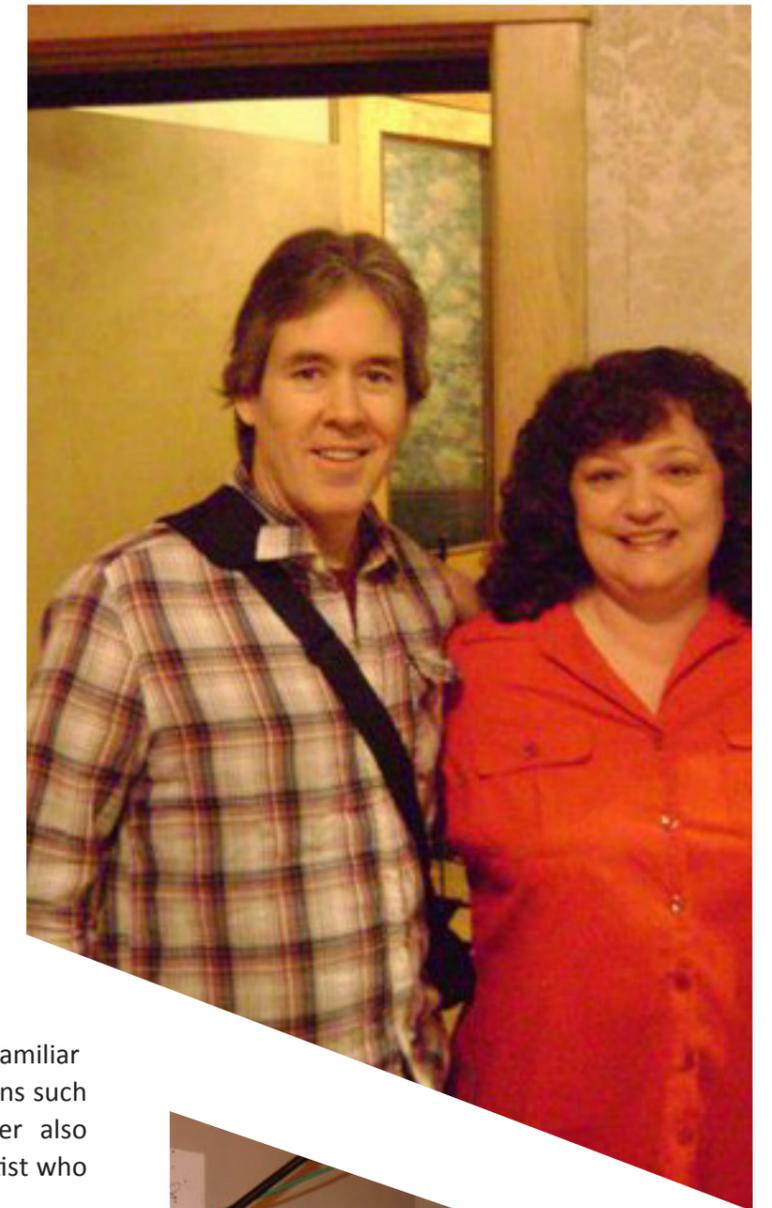
God began sending unexpected surprises her way as her inspiration for Christian music writing was building. While planning a vacation in 2010 to visit Catholic friends in Colorado, she came across a week-long celebration of Denver's life. She knew she had to go.

Shortly after, she came in contact with a close friend of Denver's – Karmen Dopsflaff – a Catholic who helps maintain Denver's charitable works and has produced the festival. Dopsflaff learned of her song for Denver and invited Gianfala Carriere to sing it during the festival.

"I was just thrilled with that," Gianfala Carriere said, "to sing his songs to share with the fans."

Attending the festival in 2011 at the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen, she met long-time musicians who had played with Denver. One was Chris Nole, a music producer and jazz and blues musician. After casually mentioning that she sang Denver's music and wrote a tribute, Nole said to call him if she needed help with her music.

That was the impetus for recording the tribute album to Denver in 2012, and the 2013 CD of her original music on the 17-track "A Matter of Faith." "The next thing I know, he asks if I can come to Nashville," she said, recording music



at  
Parlor  
Studio with  
John Denver musicians.

She came full circle at the Denver festival in October 2012 performing familiar Catholic hymns written by the Dameans such as "Beginning Today" – that Denver also loved. She is now a Denver tribute artist who sings annually at the festival.

Music is meant to heal, she said, and she hopes her music and performances minister to others in a healing way.

"It's just about using the gifts that God give us to share with others. You never know. You just need to step out in faith."

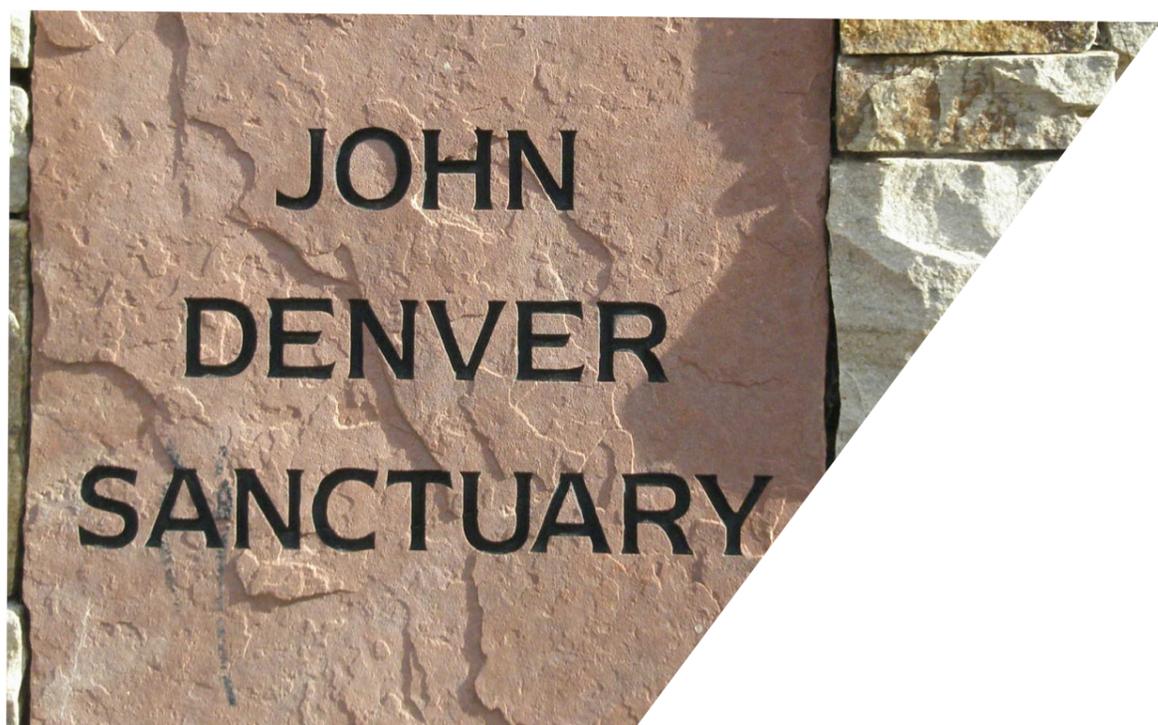
Gianfala Carriere is organizing a New Orleans concert with Nole soon and was invited to sing in Marseille, France.

Visit her website:

[\[http://www.cathygianfalacarriere.com/\]](http://www.cathygianfalacarriere.com/)

[\[http://clarionherald.info/clarion/index.php/news/latest-news/155-breaking-news/3501-st-benilde-cantor-records-cds-gives-free-concert\]](http://clarionherald.info/clarion/index.php/news/latest-news/155-breaking-news/3501-st-benilde-cantor-records-cds-gives-free-concert)





Hi, I remember my first time I went to Aspen in 1998, I was so overwhelmed and could not believe that I was really there, walking on the streets that JD walked on and going in the stores that he went in, it was incredible. Something I will never forget. Getting to meet his family and all the different activities going on and meeting all the other JD fans, it was awesome. I miss him so much and he will always be in my heart forever.

*Camille Green, April 13, 2017*



