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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – March 2005

Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome to our March newsletter. This month's newsletter is jam-packed with lots of news and interesting articles submitted by a number of very talented people. I wish to thank each of the people who have shared their articles with us this month. Our newsletter is certainly a bumper one with the many and varied submission for March. I would like to also take this opportunity to mention that without the feedback from our members, this newsletter would not be possible. A big thanks to you all – and keep up the good work!

Ebay Items for Sale

Recently, a person was trying to sell a copy of John Denver's death certificate on ebay. He also had a list of some 26 other celebrity death certificates for sale. Lynn started a petition to prevent this from continuing – the link is on the website. Just recently, I received notification from one of our members that the president of Ebay, North America would like some feedback in regard to the petition and the sale of these items. His email address is billcobb@ebay.com. Please write an email to this bloke and tell him what you think.

2005 Gathering – Bateman's Bay NSW

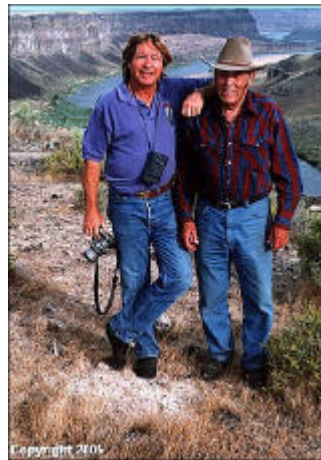
Our 2005 JD weekend will be held on the 7th – 9th October in Bateman's Bay, NSW. Our deposit has been paid, we are ready to go.... Anyone out there who would like to join us for this wonderful weekend with friends, do not hesitate to contact Carmel on hifis@bigpond.com.au. She has done a wonderful job already with the initial stages of the organisation of this weekend. For more information about this lovely setting, their website is <http://www.south-coast-accommodation.com/>. The cost for the weekend (Friday to Sunday) will be \$60 per person for the accommodation and \$30 per person for food. A deposit of \$30 per person is required ASAP (\$15 deposit for accommodation + \$15 deposit for food).

Eagle Refuge

Don't forget to contact us if you find an eagle refuge in NSW (or even the Canberra region). At

the moment, we are looking at donating to Birdland, but we would appreciate any more suggestions from our New South Wales members.

Morley Nelson (died 21/2/2005 aged 88)



*I am the eagle
I live in high country
In rocky cathedrals that
reach to the sky*

*I am the hawk
and there's blood on my feathers
But time is still turning
They soon will be dry*

*And all those who see me
And all who believe in me
Share in the freedom
I feel when I fly*

*Come dance with the west wind
And over the mountaintops
Sail o'er the canyons
And up to the stars
Reach for the heavens
And hope for the future
And all that we can be
And not what we are....*

I've been working on the words to say what I knew of Morley since I got the word that he passed away on the 21st- but an article [by Patrick Orr] I read in the Idaho Statesman summed it up pretty well so I'll post that instead-

"Raptor expert and Idaho legend Morley Nelson, who tirelessly worked to help preserve the habitat of birds of prey such as eagles and hawks, died Monday evening from heart failure.

Family and friends said Tuesday that Nelson's legacy lives on in every raptor that soars — especially over the 600,000-acre raptor conservation area he worked so hard to establish along the Snake River canyon.

"He literally changed the world with some of the things he did with raptors," said Treasure Valley Family YMCA CEO Jim Everett, who elected Nelson to carry the Olympic Torch as it passed through Boise in 2002. "Hero is a word that is used too often these days, but that is not the case with Morley — he was a hero.

"He was so consistent about the importance of the environment," Everett said. "He was passionate about leaving the world a better place for future generations."

Nelson, 88, a World War II veteran, had battled heart problems and was in the VA hospital in Boise when he died at 5 p.m. Monday, family members said.

A master falconer, Nelson raised public awareness about birds of prey through dozens of movies and TV specials starring his eagle or hawks, including seven films for Disney. He had rehabilitated and trained birds since he came to Boise after serving in World War II.

Nelson's affair with birds of prey began on his parents' ranch in North Dakota. He was about 10 and riding his horse when his dog scared up a flock of teal. Nelson watched as a falcon flying more than 100 mph struck one of the teal.

"I'd never seen anything like that. I didn't know there was anything that fast."

He trained his first hawk when he was 12. "The thing that got me in the beginning was the grace and beauty, the nobility of these birds. If you wound an eagle, he'll still come at you. They'll fight to the death, and if they like you, they'll defend you to the death. That's why so many countries have chosen them as their emblems," Nelson said in 1994.

"It's most definitely a sad day for anyone who loves birds of prey," said Bill Burnham, director of the Peregrine Fund, a hands-on environmental group that works internationally to conserve birds of prey in nature.

"He was instrumental in conservation efforts for birds of prey all over the world," Burnham said. Nelson was also an advocate for conservation efforts, helping convince federal officials to establish the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area south of Kuna.

Nelson was instrumental in both the relocation of the Peregrine Fund to Idaho in 1984 and the creation of the World Center for Birds of Prey in southern Ada County.

He worked with Idaho Power to create safer power poles for raptors to land and perch on so they weren't electrocuted. Starting in the 1950s, he spent decades convincing ranchers and farmers not to shoot raptors, but rather to accept them as an integral part of the ecosystem.

Friends said Nelson took hundreds of people over the years on guided tours of the Snake River to educate them on raptor habitat and to get a good look at the hawks and eagles who lived in the canyon.

"Raptors are better off because he was alive; he became a champion for birds of prey," said Boise author Steve Stuebner, who wrote Nelson's biography "Cool North Wind."

"I was driving up to Tamarack today and saw two bald eagles by the Payette River. I got a little emotional ... I saluted those birds. Morley's legacy lives in all those birds," Stuebner said.

Tom Cade, founder of the Peregrine Fund, said Nelson will be missed.

"It's because of Morley that (the Peregrine Fund) moved here in 1984," Cade said. "I've known him for over 50 years — he is the guy who has promoted conservation efforts for birds of prey all over the U.S. He really taught the citizenry the importance of these birds."

Stuebner said Nelson also should be lauded for his quieter legacy of passing on the fading art of falconry — the sport of flying trained birds of prey after wild quarry — to a generation of people who helped him over the years.

"He moved to Boise after World War II and could not have asked for a better place to be a falconer. It was like giving a kid keys to the candy store," Stuebner said. "He turned a lot of young people on to the art, lots of understudies who became professional falconers themselves.

"There was a secondary benefit to this, as he helped mentor some of these kids through some difficult years as teenagers," Stuebner said. "He became a secondary father figure."

It's rare that someone can leave such a tangible legacy of good works on so many levels, Everett said.

"I think it will take a number of guys to fill his shoes," Everett said. "He will be missed."

.....*How true.*

Morley was among a small group of people that I consider personal heroes; John Wesley Powell, Gene Shoemaker, John Denver, among them. I

will always be grateful that fate brought me up here when it did and that I had an opportunity to meet and talk with Morley before he left us.

They say he died from heart failure- my personal feeling is that his heart was so fully satisfied and his life was so complete that there was just no other way to go than up. Whenever I'm in Idaho, as I am fairly regularly and I see the hawks, the eagles, the falcons, I think of Morley Nelson- and rightfully so. He's a big part of the reason they're there in such large numbers. Have a good flight, Morley...

Peace,

=CD=

This article has been reproduced with permission from the author. Thanks Dave.

Here is a link to another article about Morley Nelson that will be of interest to you.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050223/NEWS01/502230344/1002>



Fly Like An Eagle

Nothing so captured John Denver's imagination like flight. In addition to being an accomplished pilot, Denver was also a devotee of birds of prey, or raptors -- the hawks and eagles that soar through the skies with grace and power. Indeed, Denver's attraction to raptors soon drew him into a friendship that helped preserve one of North America's most important raptor habitats.

In the 1970s, Denver befriended Morley Nelson, a legendary figure among raptor lovers who is featured in LET THIS BE A VOICE.

Nelson, now in his 80s, is famous for helping cajole politicians into creating the world famous Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area in Idaho. The 485,000-acre preserve straddles 81 miles of the Snake River and is centred on the river's deep canyon. Here, cliffs tower 700 feet above the river and provide countless crags where hawks, eagles, and falcons nest.

Biologists believe the preserve attracts the greatest concentration of nesting birds of prey in North America -- and perhaps the world. "The area is actually a giant, natural raptor nursery," notes a print guide to the preserve published by the federal Bureau of Land Management. "Fifteen species nest here each spring. Nine other raptor species use the area during part of their annual migration." Among the biggest visitors are Golden eagles, seen perched in their cliff-side nests in LET THIS BE A VOICE.

But getting a good view is no easy task. Denver and Nelson had to don rock-climbing gear and rappel their way down a cliff to catch a glimpse of a fledgling eagle just days away from flying. The proud infant, however, seems regally indifferent to the dangling guests -- and the cars racing along a highway far below.

The preserve is also home to one of the world's speediest raptors: the sleek Prairie falcon, which has been known to dive at speeds of 70 miles per hour. Indeed, the preserve is especially important for the falcons. About 200 pairs nest there, representing up to 25 percent of the known population. The falcons appear to be attracted to the area by the fine nesting ledges and the abundant populations of Townsend's ground squirrels that scurry around the nearby prairies. Eagles, on the other hand, prefer heartier fare: black-tailed jackrabbits. Thanks to Nelson's work and Denver's support, thousands of people can now flock to the rugged preserve each year to watch the nesting raptors soar and wheel in the clear Idaho sky. Who knows -- perhaps their lazy circles will move another young musician to song -



- and to action.

This article has been sourced from the following PBS link

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/denver/eagle.html>

Website

Our web address is:

www.highergroundaustralia.com The website is being updated regularly and if you want to leave any feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you to Lynn for keeping it up to date.

Also, if you wish to sell or buy John Denver memorabilia, please contact Lynn who will advertise your requirements through the website. Please specify whether you are in Australia or not and the currency in which you have priced the items to reduce any confusion.

Please note: Any items that are advertised on the site must be legitimate products – we do not advertise bootleg material

Ready Any Good Books Lately?

To Love the Sky by Mary Alice Beatty (available through www.amazon.com - ISBN 0-932919-02-2)

A wonderful salute to the pilots who flew the pioneer international airlines. The expression 'to stand by your man' certainly is true in the author's case. This is Mary Alice Beatty's own story of her life as the wife of a pilot who flew and helped charter the early airline routes and the many ups and downs they encountered along the way. It is a story of love, courage and determination to beat the odds at any cost. A great read, 8/10

Thanks to Margaret who submitted this month's book review. The author also happens to be the grandmother of one of our HGA members.

Heard Any Good Music Lately?

I am really on a roll here lately with the music. Our local music store has had a bargain bin to end all bargain bins lately. I picked up a Mamas and Papas DVD recently and it was a wonderfully biographical. It includes a number of interviews with many of the singers, some really old footage of them in their hey day and of course the great music. For those people who love the 60's folk music (and I think that would be almost every one of you), it is well worth hunting through the bins at your local JB HI FI store

Windstar News



If anyone living in Australia would like to become a member of the Australia Connection, you must first be a global member of Windstar (www.wstar.org) for \$35 USD, then membership to the Connection is free. For more information, email: info@windstaraustraliaconnection.com or visit the website www.windstaraustraliaconnection.com/.

Poetry

Every now and then you read a poem that really speaks to you. Dennis' poem is just beautiful. (printed with permission)

Like a River

By Dennis Ducey (Dedicated to the memory of John Denver)

Oh I love the Mountains, the forests so tall
and green

I love the river that runs so pure and clean

She beckons me to wash away all my sorrow
-- all my pain

She invites my soul -- to run with her --
wild and free

As she wanders -- through valleys and
ravines

Oh I love the life around me -- the Eagle in
her nest, --

the wolf that howls deep -- within the
wilderness

My life is like the River -- some times calm
and serene

Some times wild and raging -- like the river
--

plunging --- into a deep ravine

Like the River I am at best --
as I wonder through the Wilderness --
my soul unencumbered and at rest

Like the River I endeavor to nourish life
along the way --
knowing I have brought Joy and some times'
pain
to the lives I have touched -- along the way

Like the River I know my life will go on
never knowing what lies around the bend
winding through time until it metes it's end.

And when I round that final bend
I pray I'll find John there --
Singing Love Songs that will never -- ever -
- end.

New Book

"Sacred Stones: Colorado's Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre," by Thomas J. Noel (Denver's Division of Theatres & Arenas, \$34.95)

John Denver may have said it best: "Almost heaven. Every day at Red Rocks is new and different. ... Not only fans but also performers get excited. This is their field of dreams."

And that's just the amphitheater. Some 65 million years before the Beatles, Judy Collins and Crosby, Stills & Nash performed in that perfect outdoor arena, excited dinosaurs tramped through the area, leaving behind their bones and footprints. In more recent history, Ute Indians and then white pioneers also found Red Rocks a field of dreams.

One promoter, John Brisben Walker Sr., who built a stone castle atop Mount Falcon - it burned in 1918 after it was struck by lightning - had plans for a summer house in the area. It was never built. More successful was Walker's idea of making Red Rocks one of Denver's mountain parks. He sold Red Rocks to the city for \$50,000, despite the objection of one city father that 15 miles was too far for Denver residents to drive for a day's outing.

In this engrossing account, Colorado historian Thomas J. Noel tells the story of Red Rocks from its prehistoric days to the present; its restored amphitheater, with its new visitors' center, is still a premier venue for performing artists.

One of the most interesting sections in "Sacred Stones" is about the construction of the amphitheater by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a Depression-era make-work group. Some 300 CCC boys were paid \$1 per day each to work on Red Rocks, while they lived in boot-camp conditions. They awoke at 6 a.m. to the sounds of reveille, went to bed at 10 p.m. taps, and their beds were inspected each morning. One CCC boy recalled how embarrassed he was at being given an award for best-made bed in camp.

The amphitheater opened in 1941. Its open bench-seating was so popular that in 1999, when the city proposed a \$22 million renovation that would have turned planter boxes into high-priced box seats, Denverites protested. The city backed off and retained the egalitarian seating arrangement.

Readers are in for a treat with this enjoyable account of one of Denver's favorite places. "Sacred Stones" is nicely illustrated with hundreds of photographs of the early settlers, the amphitheater, the trading post, the CCC and Red Rocks entertainers, from Lily Pons to Jerry Garcia to Willie Nelson.

An Article

This article was shared on one of the many John Denver newsgroups and I thought I would like to share it with you.

Raining Fire and Remembering John Denver by Rex Robbins (Feb 13, 2005)

Summer 2004 will probably always have a couple of points of reference for me. It was a presidential election year for one thing, pitting George W. Bush against John Kerry. I cannot remember an election with such strong, to the point of hatred, sentiments from both sides or such an injection of religious fervor. An associate minister at our church strongly criticized President Bush, from the lectern, for the invasion of Iraq. More prevalent (in Arkansas at least) were the bumper stickers saying to "VOTE GOD," often on the same vehicle with a Bush sticker, but never without doubt as to the political position of the owner. The other strong memory I have, seemingly unrelated to the first, came from a trip I made with my daughter to Colorado. Here is that story.

"Did you see that one?"

I probably asked my daughter that question 50 times over the course of the evening and early morning hours. We were witnessing the earth plow through the tiny particles of debris left by Comet Swift-Tuttle. More simply stated, we were watching the Perseids meteor shower. Given our location, it would also be appropriate to say that we were watching "it raining fire in the sky."

The words from John Denver's signature song, "Rocky Mountain High," were inspired by a backpacking trip that he made with some friends to a "clear blue mountain lake" in Colorado. The trip was planned to coincide with the meteor shower that occurs in August each year. The memories of that trip formed the basis for the autobiographical song that helped propel him into the ranks of superstardom.

Denver's popularity, which reached its peak in about 1975, had largely faded by the mid-'80s. By the '90s, Denver received more attention for his arrests for drunken driving than for his music or his humanitarian efforts. He was widely ridiculed, not only for his driving record, but for his two widely publicized divorces and rumors of his philandering lifestyle.

Like so many of his fans, I had lost touch with his music over the years. My teenagers, perhaps reflecting the tide of popular sentiment, were merciless with ridicule if I attempted to play one of his CDs. For me, accounts of his personal foibles were disturbing.

His death in 1997 demanded a fresh review of his music and his accomplishments.

Today's celebrities generally lend their name to a cause or two, something exotic like supporting the lost children of Uzbekistan. Denver thought and functioned on a broader scale. Promoting world peace, stopping world hunger and the salvation of the planet's ecosystems were all on his agenda. In the early '80, he was the first American musical artist to tour the Soviet Union since the termination of cultural exchanges. He was the first American musician to tour China and Vietnam. He served on President Carter's Commission on Hunger and worked tirelessly until his death to support environmental causes.

Did Denver have any significant impact on these universal problems? His good works have mostly been interred but he is still widely associated with the environmental movement. Some would argue that he deserves credit for helping to normalize relations with our Cold War enemies by helping break down the walls of fear that maintained the walls of concrete. Others would argue that his efforts were so diluted as to be ineffectual.

In the end, I am no more able to judge his impact on the world stage than I am to judge the morality of his personal life. Perhaps all that can be said is that he wanted to make a difference.

In summer 2004, my daughter, Kelly and I made the trip from our home in Arkansas to Colorado. During our stay, we climbed a fourteener and did some mountain-bike riding. Our final excursion was to backpack up to the same mountain lake that Denver had visited more than 30 years before. For Kelly, the trip was a chance to get away for some recreation before returning to college. For me, it was a long-delayed, final tribute to a fallen star of a different kind.

When we first circled the small lake, Kelly noticed an aspen tree where someone had carefully carved the words "I've seen it raining fire in the sky." We set up our camp, the only one on the lake, under the boughs of that tree. In the afternoon, we caught a few brightly colored descendants of the same brook trout that Denver had caught on his trip. As the sun went down, we built a campfire, and later, moved our sleeping bags to a small clearing overlooking the lake to gain the best view of the skybound constellation named Perseus. The first meteor we saw was a fireball that lit up the sky and left a smoke trail.

In times past, Native Americans or early settlers visiting the area would have watched the same heavenly display and imagined falling stars instead of small particles of glowing debris. Conversely, they may have believed the stars to be grains of glowing sand on a dark canopy, rather than the colossal suns that they are. I suspect that today we are no farther along in our ability to judge the good and evil that men do.

Still, we choose our heroes, make our pilgrimages and stake our claims to the ultimate truth based on their teaching. Perhaps, in the final analysis, our only valid claim is that we were able to view the universe from their perspective for a little while.

Rex Robbins writes from North Little Rock, Ark.

Environmental News

Positive Approach Regenerates Timber Town

Recently, I saw an interesting episode of Landline on the ABC. Although a repeat (it had first aired in August, 2004) it was a really interesting story about the almost death and regeneration of Geevestown, a timber town in Tasmania, Australia. When the APM timber mill closed down in 1982, the locals lost their jobs and the town's businesses started closing down. It is the story of how the residents of a small town pulled together to create a thriving tourist town. Their hard work has paid off as now Geevestown now boasts an airwalk among the treetops of the forest.

The following is an excerpt from this show.

As the town started to regain some pride the State Government announced a \$4.5 million forest airwalk would be built on the Huon River near Geeveston. People would be able to walk through the treetops of the forests that people around the country had been hotly debating for decades

"Well we went down to the local community and said to them that we wanted to create a link between a new industry of tourism, which we believed had the potential to flourish in the region and this great giant of forestry which had supported the community for 150 years and we built an airwalk - the longest tall tree walk in the world, right in the middle of the working forest," Premier Paul Lennon said.

"So we linked the two deliberately, just if you like, to settle the score once and for all that forestry and tourism could work closely together and that both industries could thrive together and it's been very successful. What we see in Geeveston today is a lot different to what it was like in the late 1990s."

Since opening in July 2001 the 620 metre long Airwalk, which varies in height between 25 and 45 metres, has become one of Tasmania's tourist icons.

Please read the full story by using the following link. It is a feel-good story and if there is anyone out there who has actually walked the airwalk, please write to us and tell us about your experience (photos too, if you have them).

<http://www.abc.net.au/landline/content/2004/s1181101.htm>

Kindred Spirit

Alan J Cherry

You filled up our hearts like the mountains in springtime
You gave us the songs of a sweet country boy
So this is my tribute It's my sweet surrender
To one who has given
The world so much joy

Along country roads that are travelled by many
You lived life without care and followed your dreams
You dreamt of a world that could live life in harmony
Like the birds in the air
Like the fish in the streams

So fly like an eagle through high craggy mountain tops
To rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky
Oh drift on the west wind, the journey is endless
Your music and songs
Are your lasting goodbye.

You sang with a passion of life in the mountains
Of people you loved and the ones left behind
But the song I loved most is the song of the eagle
It reminds me of you
And I know you don't mind

So fly like an eagle through high craggy mountain tops
To rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky
Oh drift on the west wind, the journey is endless
Your music and songs
Are your lasting goodbye.

Fly like an eagle reach to the sky
Drift on the west wind
Your music and songs
Are your lasting goodbye

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