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Higher Ground Australia



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## HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – October 2005

### Welcome

Welcome to everyone. I have been feeling a little flat this week after a most successful weekend. We had a terrific time in Old Mogo Town, near Batemans Bay, NSW. It was a wonderful setting, although you would never believe we were only 10 kms from the coast. The 12th October was spent in 'quiet contemplation'. I would like to welcome all the new people who have joined us, particularly those who travelled many kilometres to meet a bunch of strangers. I hope that we made you all feel welcome.

### Old Mogo Town

Members of Higher Ground Australia (HGA) met in the quiet township of Mogo, near Bateman's Bay last weekend to celebrate the life and music of John Denver. We say it every year, but we are not fibbing when we come away and say that it was the 'best weekend ever'. Our friends arrived from Victoria, Queensland and many parts of New South Wales, converging on the tiny town of Mogo, just 10 kms from the coastal town of Bateman's Bay.

Each year our member-base has gently grown and more and more people are coming along for the company and the weekend away. Over the past two years, we have also had the opportunity to advertise on radio through interviews and this year, we even had an article written in the local paper about our weekend. We did get quite a bit of interest from the locals for our BBQ and campfire sing-a-long this year. John's spirit is still very much alive in Australia.

Many of us flew from our home states to Canberra. After arriving and meeting up at the airport, we departed by convoy of hire cars through the Great Dividing Range to the coastal town of Batemans Bay, where we stopped for a quick lunch of local seafood. We were then off to Old Mogo Town, which is a replica of a gold mining town of the 1800's. We found our accommodation and the people who had already arrived to start our weekend, catching up with old friends and meeting new ones. The one thing about our JD weekends is our ability to fall into old patterns and it really feels as if it were only

yesterday that we were all together – not an entire year.

After dinner that evening, we adjourned to the conference centre for our annual general meeting where decisions from the past and decisions for the future are made. Our AGM, is a very important part of the weekend as it is where everyone can discuss decisions on where our fundraising will be donated and any other issues that arise.

Saturday greeted us with a fine and sunny day and a few of us went to Batemans Bay for a look while others went to Mogo Village to check out the local crafts, or went on one of the conducted tours through Old Mogo Town with one of the local identities. There was much to be seen and gold to be panned, and a few of our group came back clutching small gold nuggets. The afternoon went quickly enough and soon it was time to dress in our 'period costumes' and have dinner before the annual sing-a-long, raffle, book giveaway and silent auction.



Everyone got into the spirit of the theme of Colonial Australia and dressed up accordingly

The sing-a-long continued on for many hours, accompanied by the frogs and other night creatures. We wound wearily back to our bunk houses as the birds were starting to chirp (the early birds – that is).

After a sleep and breakfast and timed to exactly the same time as those in Aspen were gathered at the campfire, we read out our letters from our friends in America and New Zealand, plus other letters that had been given to me to read. After a

minute's silence, we then emptied our bottles of water that we had brought from our homes into a bucket and started to plant our five native trees. One tree for John, one for Merryl Moore (Max's wife who passed on last year), one tree for the continued sustainability of the environment, one tree for the people affected by disaster (both natural and terrorist activity) over the past year and the last tree was planted for peace across the world. Once the trees were planted and watered with our combined water, the plaques were laid in front of John and Merryl's trees.

Highly charged with emotion, we took off to visit and to be photographed with an eagle at Birdland, which we will be sponsoring for the next twelve months with the money (approximately \$1300.00) we have raised through the silent auction. The eagle cannot be fully rehabilitated so is unable to be released into the wild. We have been given the opportunity to name this wonderful bird and we will be asking people from across the world help us to name the eagle.

### **Birdland**

The silent auction has been a wonderful success as usual. We raised \$1337.20 for the silent auction. This money will be donated to Birdland in Batemans Bay. There may be some further funds that will be added to the Birdland donation.

Birdland is a wonderful animal park, featuring mostly Australian natives, but some other species as well. David Burnett wrote to us about the eagle at Birdland. I included it in the newsletter last month. This eagle is being beautifully looked after, but unfortunately cannot be rehabilitated so that it can be released in the wild. Our 2005 silent auction money has been donated to the eagle's continued upkeep. After visiting Birdland, albeit briefly, we can be assured that the eagle has found a wonderful home. Here is the link to Birdland – please visit their lovely web site.

<http://www.birdlandanimalpark.com.au/index.html>

### **Name the Eagle Ballot**

The female eagle at Birdland has not yet been named and HGA has been given the honour of naming it. The people attending the JD gathering last weekend have put in their ideas. We would like to extend to you all the opportunity to name this beautiful Wedge-Tail Eagle. Please email your favourite eagle name to [imagann@iprimus.com.au](mailto:imagann@iprimus.com.au) by next Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

### **Merchandise**

This year, we had some 2006 calendars in full colour, calico tote bags (perfect size for your song books), note books, puzzle books and key rings for sale. Sale of these items totalled \$335.00. If you are interested in purchasing any of these

items, please check out the website. There are still some items available for sale.

### **Cookbook**

All copies of the 2004 cookbook were sold. The cookbook money (\$195) raised at last year's weekend was included in last year's donation to Australian Native Animal Care in Brisbane. There was a sum of \$510 from the sales of the cookbook since the 2004 weekend. That money will be used to purchase equipment required by Australian Native Animal Care in Brisbane. The cookbook was a wonderful success. We will be producing a second printing of the cookbook in 2006, so if you missed out last time, you will have an opportunity to buy one early next year.

### **Raffle**

Our raffle this year had two prizes. First prize was a hand made cotton cot quilt, which was won by Lynn McGann.



Second prize was a gift pack of two cotton hand towels, candles and photos, which was won by Melanie Patfield.

Congratulations to you both and thank you to Ursula who donated the second prize. We really appreciate it.

The raffle raised \$155 which was used to pay for the plaque and stone and the trees. Thanks to everyone who participated in this worthy activity.

### **Costumes**

For all those who dressed up on Saturday night (and for those who didn't) we asked for a gold or silver coin donation. We raised an additional \$55.30, which will be added to the donation to Birdland.

### **Book Giveaway**

We had three Christopher Canyon illustrated books to give away this year

**Sunshine on My Shoulders** was won by Moorooka Primary school in QLD, nominated by Suji Bridgestock. **Ancient Rhymes** was won by The Grange P – 12 Junior School, in Vic, nominated by Johnny McGann. **Take me Home Country Roads** was won by Mittagong State Primary School, NSW, won by Max Moore.

We were all delighted when Max drew out his own entry to win this book for his granddaughter's school. Max's granddaughter will attend the Mittagong school in February 2006. Perhaps Max would like to volunteer to read the book to the new students next year? The books have been packaged up and will be posted on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Thanks**

On behalf of everyone who attended the weekend at Mogo, I would like to say a huge thanks to Alistair and Carmel who organised the accommodation and food this year. It is not an easy task to organise these events and without the help and support of each and every person, it simply would not be possible to do it each year. The weekend at Old Mogo Town was wonderful and organised right down to the last detail. I certainly cannot thank Alistair and Carmel enough for their dedication to make it such a great weekend.

Thanks to Alistair for organising the radio interviews and the newspaper article that was published in the local Batemans Bay paper. It was great advertising and it did have an impact on our swelling numbers.

I would also like to thank every person who attended. It was great to see everyone work together, helping each other out and working together for the wonderful and successful weekend we had together.

I would also like to publicly thank everyone who donated items for the weekend, including items for the silent auction, prizes for the raffle and all those little bits and pieces that people so generously give. I cannot believe how generous people are when it comes to these weekends. The beneficiaries of those donations (Birdland and Australian Native Care) will both be delighted with the response this year.

### **Next Year's Gathering**

Next year we will be returning to the Sunshine State – Queensland for our annual John Denver Gathering. We lily-livered southerners will be looking for some nice weather about then. We will let you know where it will be held after some places have been investigated. We are already looking forward to next year's gathering. We will also let you know the dates for the weekend as soon as we have them confirmed by our friends overseas.

### **Rocky Mountain High Ski Run Plaque**

There appears to be some sort of misunderstanding about the removal of a plaque at the recently sold Rocky Mountain High ski Run. Please read the following:

**Dear John Denver Friends,**

**Thanks to everyone who participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual "A Musical Tribute to John Denver" wonderful concerts in Aspen, CO. It was certainly fun seeing so many of you return again this year.**

**There seems to be a misunderstanding concerning the plaque removed from the "Rocky Mountain High" ski run sold at auction this weekend. Numerous people approached me concerned with the removal of the plaque. They were afraid the run was being abandoned as far as its tribute to John Denver. This is not the case. Please be aware that as part of the donation from the Aspen Ski Corporation, they are in turn erecting a new plaque to be in place prior to the start of ski season. I personally plan to ski that run early in the year. One of the first things I plan to do is observe the new plaque.**

**Rest assured, John's memory has not been removed from Snowmass Mountain.**

**Kindest regards,**

**Kenn Roberts**

**Founder & Concert Chairman**

### **From Marina Green in Gippsland**

Thanks for passing along your thoughts about the 12<sup>th</sup> October.

**John Denver week here in Gippsland for me was interesting. The friends of Mt Baw Baw have reported an increase in the number of birds of prey banded in Mt Baw Baw National Park. Mt Baw Baw National Park is 50 years old this year.**

**John is remembered in many unusual ways. I am studying disability studies. My newest closest friend who is blind is inspirational. A true friend of John we are talking about change here. So I spoke to her about Windstar. She has read John's book as a transcript. My fantastic student I teach swimming loves dolphins. Dolphins and whales and Jacques Yves Cousteau. It hasn't been an easy week and I have learnt to sign Windstar in Aslan.**

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.  
Marina**

### **Alan Cherry**

The following is an excerpt from Alan Cherry's biography:

**John Denver's music and song writing have been a great inspiration to Alan's musical career and he sings many of Denver's songs.**

**Alan has been writing songs and poetry for many years and feels now is the time to write and record his own experiences of life as the son of a true blue Aussie battler from the bush. Alan's latest song, 'Kindred Spirit is a tribute to a man he admired so much as a performer, song writer, humanitarian and conservationist, John Denver.**

For any of you who have heard Alan Cherry's wonderful tribute song, you would know that he is a very talented artist. On the 5<sup>th</sup> November, Alan Cherry and his 4 piece group, Classical Gass will be playing at the Cardinia Cultural Centre at Pakenham. Anyone who is interested in seeing Alan, please call 0409 174 600 for more information. Alan kindly donated two autographed Kindred Spirit CDs to our silent auction. Thanks you Alan, they were both sold and we appreciate your generous donation.

### **Nice Picture**

Pat sent this picture to share



### **Buckleys Christmas Show with John Denver**

Hosted by Issi Dye (of Channel 10 late night TV in the 1970's) and performed by Colin Perkins.

The show is on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 at Buckleys Entertainment Centre, 54 Fellmongers Road, Breakwater. Morning tea and show is \$19.00. For more information, please call (03) 52484866

### **Letters**

This year, I am sharing the letters that we read this year at our tree planting ceremony. Please enjoy reading these wonderful letters and thank those people who have taken the time to put pen to paper for this annual tradition.

Dear John Denver "Family" around the world...

For the past eight years John Denver has brought us together in his tribute as newly found friends who have grown into a loving world-wide family, sharing a love for his music and his dedication to helping the world become a better place. Although many of our friends are unable to attend the various tributes on a yearly basis, we all continue to gather in some way to honor the man, his music, and his legacy to the world. For these past eight years, we've gathered in memory at a beach in Pacific Grove, California, and planted trees in the forests and parks of Australia to honor the man and his service to nature and mankind. Many have gathered along the coastlines of New Zealand while others have offered songs and harmony in homes around the world to celebrate the touch that John Denver has left on our lives. In Aspen we've dedicated a beautiful John Denver Sanctuary, filled with boulders from John's beloved Colorado and inscribed with his poetry of music, along with trees and flowers that many of us have helped to plant. We've donated trees and memorial stones at the Snowmass Chapel Memorial Garden in honor of John and his own influence on that beautiful area. We've contributed to the massive bronze statue "Spirit," surrounded by an inscribed brick walkway, at John's beloved Windstar, again honoring the dedication of John in his work for peace and harmony in the world. Many have worked tirelessly to rebuild the Meditation Platform above the John Denver Meadowlands at Windstar, a place where we all can feel the "magic" that captured John's inspiration for his dedication to the environment and to the peoples of the world. Others have worked to create a living memorial with the John Denver Peace Cloth, a massive worldwide effort that truly connects us into One World. Many are re-dedicating themselves to the work of Windstar to inspire individuals to work together to preserve our world. We gather again at the Windstar lands to sing around the campfire in the glorious Rocky Mountains, and to celebrate the life of a truly unique man who has brought such joy and love into our lives.

As we move forward remembering John Denver and what he has accomplished for our world, let us "do what we can do" to continue to make the world a better place for ourselves, for our children, and for our grandchildren. Let us continue to allow John's influence and impact on our lives as we realize, once again, that "he is so in my heart, he is here, he could never be gone."

Peace and love to all who share our admiration for John Denver~

Linda Wolverton/ for Harold Simpson and the Aspen- Windstar Campfire, October 2005

Dear Family,

I use the word "family" quite deliberately. This time together each year has come to be more and more of a family reunion. This past year I have been intensely aware of the changes that John's passing has made in my life. In talking with others, I find that my experience is far from unique.

I still miss John terribly. I sometimes ache to hear new music. I regret every concert opportunity I ever passed up.

In the cycle of life, however, death brings about opportunity for new growth. And John's passing, however painful, has brought about many wonderful new friendships and attitudes. Although I have known this JD "family" for less than the eight years that have passed, I feel that I have known some of you all my life. Friendships that began on the beach here seven years ago have come to be more treasured than I had thought possible.

As we celebrate John's life, here on the beach in California, we are intrinsically linked to our extended John Denver family there in Aspen and in Australia and elsewhere around the world. John left us with many gifts, foremost of all his music and commitment to a better planet. His final lasting gift to us all is this wonderful global family, gathered in his memory not only today, but throughout the year.

We here in Pacific Grove would like to extend the invitation to all of our world family to join us here each 2nd Sunday in October as we celebrate John's life with our annual beach clean-up and music events.

Peace, Health and Happiness in the coming year, Margie Hoff, for all the members of the "John Denver - The Legacy Continues" and our extended family here on the beach.

Thanks ever so much for the letter. I know, time does get away. We will be thinking of you on Sunday morning, and actually all the World Family for the next ten days or so. Please give our love to the group and a special Hi to Max.

We all continue to be blessed by the man who was and who is John Denver. Viewing the state of our world the significance of John rises.

***"And the song that I am singing is a prayer to unbelievers. Come and stand beside us we can find a better way."***

Maybe that is why we're hearing his music on the radio much more these days.

Have a great time.

Love Susan - and the Kiwi gang.

## INTERNATIONAL JOHN DENVER MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

*"My spirit will never be broken or caught for the soul is a free-flying thing".*

Like an eagle that needs neither comfort nor thought to rise up on glorious wings" (Eagles and Horses – Denver/Henry)

To our dear John Denver family in Aspen, Monterey and New Zealand,

Greetings to you all from Batemans Bay, Australia. Please take the hand of the person next to you to create a link between yourselves and us.

This year we are celebrating John's life and music on the beautiful south coast of New South Wales. This lovely fishing town is situated between the Pacific Ocean and the mountainous hinterland area with an abundance of natural beauty and wildlife.

By bringing us together with a common thread of the love for his music and the respect for the values held so close to his heart, John's spirit is very much with us as we stand here 'talking' to you through this exchange of letters.

In the twelve months since we last gathered in John's name, there have been a number of devastating events that have taken place in our world, both natural disasters and acts of terrorism, which have affected hundreds of thousands of people across the world. We pray that these events do not break the spirits of those people affected, and that they too can rise up on their 'glorious wings' in order to build their lives again.

On this fifth gathering for HGA and the eighth anniversary of John's passing, we plant our trees dedicated to John and for world peace. We are thinking of you all today as we thank John for the music, and for sharing his talents with us all.

Love and Peace to you all

Janette Frawley

On behalf of Higher Ground Australia

Dear Max,

As you fondly remember I had the pleasure and delight of touring with yourself and the John Denver Touring Party of the Australian leg of this World Tour, entitled 'One World' as John's security advisor.

There are so many happy memories of that tour, meeting three of the Elvis Presley 'Take Care of Business' Band namely James Burton, Jerry Scheff and of course the inimitable Glenn D

Hardin. When we returned to Sydney for John's Sydney Entertainment Centre concerts I was asked to meet Lee Holdridge and his wife and son at Sydney Airport. Lee arrived from Los Angeles to conduct a full symphony orchestra at the Sydney concert. What a thrill to meet Lee on that special afternoon and drive him and wife Laura and son to the Sebel Town House where we were all staying.

Lee has always had a special place in my musical heart as he was the Conductor and Musical Arranger for arguable the greatest rock record ever produced – Hot August Night with Neil Diamond. Lee is a musical powerhouse in America writing many symphonies and of course soundtrack music for films and television miseries.

Now, back to John. On the first night of the Sydney concert the Entertainment Centre was packed to the rafters with nearly 14,500 adoring fans, the Symphony Orchestra was fully tuned and on stage. John's band was introduced including the drummer Jerry Carrigan a fabulous session drummer who backed stars like Emmylou Harris, Waylon Jennings and of course, John.

John was introduced to thundering applause and told us that he had written a song in memory of the astronauts who had recently perished in the fiery Challenger disaster. He also told us that he was the civilian member chosen for that ill-fated trip but the President decided that he wanted an educationist instead so John was asked to stand aside for Christy McAuliffe, a school teacher.

John wrote 'Flying for Me' dedicating that song to the deceased, but nonetheless brave astronauts. The orchestra led and John started singing, but half way through the rendition he forgot the words and became very emotional. Lee being the consummate professional knew what had happened and swelled the orchestra over John and him most professional group of musicians picked up the lead and played their hearts out allowing John to stand back and play his guitar to the sheer delight of the adoring audience.

Much discussion took place backstage during interval on this little incident and a plot was hatched.

When John came back on stage after interval he told his audience that this was the first time he had been overcome with emotion to the level he had difficulty in singing but he was going to do something that he had never done before. He was going to sing 'Flying for Me' again.

Well, the audience went wild. When they had settled back Lee tapped the rostrum and the Orchestra commenced playing in concert with John's four absolutely magnificent musicians. John stepped up to the mike and his voice

sounded like the angels were singing. I have never experienced anything like it in my life. He soared and the 100 piece orchestra went with him. I was sitting with Laura Holdridge off stage near the sound mixer and when I looked around she had nearly as many tears in her eyes as I had. I don't think there was a dry eye in the place that night.

I have toured more than 100 international stars over a number of years and there are many happy stories to remember but very few of the calibre of the one I have just told. That night will remain with me for the rest of my life and when I think of John and the happiness he gave to some many millions of fans around the world my mind wanders back to the night at the Sydney Entertainment Centre when he sang 'Flying for Me'. I like to think that he is now 'Flying for Me'.

God bless you John and thanks for many, many hours of friendship, happy memories and musical pleasure

Peter McCall (OAM) Melbourne.

From Alan Cherry

As I explained to Lynn, I am very busy rehearsing our 'Launch Concert' for our new 4 pc Group 'Classical Gass' for the 5<sup>th</sup> November at the Cardinia Cultural Centre here at Pakenham.

Karen and I would have loved to come along to your weekend at Batemans Bay, but time does not afford us the break away.

I am forwarding two copies of my 'tribute CD' and hope that you can use them somehow on your Get Together weekend.

I would love to meet with your group sometime in the near future and if ever any of your members are in our audience, please do not hesitate to come up and say hi and introduce yourself. Any friend of John Denver's music and songs is a friend of mine.

Wishing you all a fantastic weekend,

Yours musically, Alan Cherry.

Thanks everyone. This has been a bumper newsletter with information from our weekend in Batemans Bay.

## Rhymes & Reasons

*So you speak to me of sadness and the coming of the winter,  
The fear that is within you now that seems to never end,  
And the dreams that have escaped you  
And the hope that you've forgotten,  
And you tell me that you need me now  
And you want to be my friend,  
and you wonder where we're going,  
Where's the rhyme and where's the reason?  
And it's you cannot accept:  
It is here we must begin to seek the wisdom of the children  
and the graceful way of flowers in the wind.*

*For the children and the flowers are my sisters and my brothers,  
their laughter and their loveliness would clear a cloudy day.  
Like the music of the mountains and the colors of the rainbow,  
they're a promise of the future and a blessing for today.*

*Though the cities start to crumble and the towers fall around us,  
the sun is slowly fading and it's colder than the sea.  
It is written: From the desert to the mountains they shall lead us,  
by the hand and by the heart, they will comfort you and me.  
In their innocence and trusting they will teach us to be free.*

*For the children and the flowers are my sisters and my brothers,  
their laughter and their loveliness would clear a cloudy day.  
And the song that I am singing is a prayer to non-believers,  
come and stand beside us we can find a better way.*

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