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Higher Ground Australia



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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER - January 2006

Welcome

Hello and a happy new year to everyone. I hope that your Christmas and New Year have been everything you wished for.

We have just returned from holidays in Thailand and Cambodia, which was a fantastic experience for us all. We visited many popular tourist attractions, attempting in a small way to gain an insight into the way of life of the people of these two nations.



Happy Australia Day

On Thursday, 26th January, our wonderful nation celebrates Australia Day. Although just 218 years since Australia was colonised by free settlers and convicts on the First Fleet, Australia has become a wonderful and diverse nation. This time each year, there is some debate about our National Anthem and whether it should be changed. Advance Australia Fair became our national Anthem in 1974. Although many fine songs about our nation have been written, many of which do engender the very essence of being Australian, I believe the Advance Australia Fair is most suitable. As you all know, John wrote and sang Sing Australia for the 1988 bi-centenary celebrations. I love this song and I really wish it got air-play on Australia Day, along with the national anthem and 'I am Australian', by the Seekers. Today, I have emailed Keith MacGowan on 3aw as he does play John Denver's songs from time to time to request that he plays Sing Australia.

If you would like to contact Keith and make a request, please contact him on this address: kmcgowan@3aw.com.au. You can also listen to the shows live. Here is the link. http://www.3aw.com.au/main_index.shtml

I hope that all our Australian Friends have a wonderful Australia Day on Thursday. It will be a

bit hot in Victoria, so I don't think the typical and traditional Aussie Barbie will be an option this year.

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to Maureen of Brisbane who reached a half-century milestone on 30th December 2005. We heard that you celebrated it in style!!!!



Happy Birthday to Max Moore who turns 83 on 23rd January. We all extend our very best wishes to you. We are thrilled that you have become so much part of this little John Denver family here in Australia.



For those who would like to remember John's birthday on 31st December, please take a moment to leave a message and light a candle for him on Linda's site.

<http://www.kbnet.com/book/html/lightacandle.html>

Congratulations

Princess Mary and Prince Frederik have finally named their 'Baby Kingaroo'. Christian Valdemar Henri John. We particularly love the Henri John!!

Our Deepest Condolences

I would like to extend our deepest condolences to one of our friends in Texas, America, whose son passed away after a short illness. Diane was a friend of John and Annie while she lived in Aspen.

Please keep her in your thoughts or prayers.

What is happening in Australia?

As usual there are lots of things to occupy our thoughts and actions and January 2006 is no exception. The schools around Australia are starting the new school year either this week or next week after the Christmas holidays.

Australia Day is approaching in a couple of days. There are activities in all towns to commemorate Australia Day. As mentioned before, Victoria's Sausage Sizzles may be severely hampered due to the forecast high temperatures. If you are looking for something different to do, why not visit the Immigration Museum in Flinders Street Melbourne to find out more about the people who have made this nation the wonderful place it is.

Chinese New Year comes on the heels of Australia Day and we celebrate the Year of the Dog with our Chinese friends. Many Chinese people came to Australia in the 1880's to the goldfields. There will be many celebrations by our Chinese Australians this weekend.

It is also time to think about organising a group for Clean Up Australia day on March 5th. Although I would dearly love to see Michael Crawford in Cooloom that weekend, I will be attending the annual Head of the School Girls regatta in Geelong that weekend. This will be the last year of the school rowing for me. However, like last year, I will be encouraging the girls to pick up their rubbish and put it all in the correct receptacles.

The XVIII Commonwealth Games will be starting on 15th March in my city, Melbourne, Australia. There was great excitement today as the baton finally reached our shores. It will make its way around Australia before arriving in Melbourne in time for the opening ceremony. This is a great honour for Melbourne as we are the sporting capital of the world and our wonderful facilities will be seen by people across the commonwealth. For the Trivia Buffs, you might recognise the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), which was used for the 1956 Olympics. Although some upgrades have been done, very little has actually changed in the last 50 years! With a capacity of around 95,000, it is also one of the largest stadiums in the world. Believe it or not, a Collingwood vs Carlton football match will fill the ground to capacity, as does the cricket each Boxing Day. I hope that many of you will be able to see some of the sports offered during the games.

2006 Annual John Denver Gathering

We will be celebrating the life and music of John Denver on 13th – 15th October, 2006. We will be returning to Queensland again this year. The venue has not yet been selected, but we will let everyone know the details as soon as they come to hand. As with other years, you will be asked to send a deposit for the venue and for the food costs prior to the weekend. These deposits are not refundable.

Each and every one of our gatherings has been successful. We have a lot of fun, but we especially love meeting the new people who come along each year.

During the course of the year, we will be calling out for volunteers for different things and for donations of goods for the silent auction. The auction is always a huge success and we have been able to donate some large amounts of money to raptor rehabilitation centres over the years. We have also been able to gain some lasting friendships with our friends from these facilities, who keep us posted on their activities and the health and well-being of their birds.

Although ten months away, you would be surprised at how fast the year really flies, so now is the time to let the boss know that you will be away for the weekend of the 13th – 15th October.

Bushfires

It is bushfire season in Australia at the moment. In parts of Australia that are suffering from drought conditions, bushfires are a threat. With the high temperatures we have been experiencing over the past 10 days, parts of Victoria have erupted in flames. There has been loss of life and property over the past few days. Tragically these fires have been deliberately lit.

Our first gathering was celebrated in the Grampians area of Western Victoria in 2001. We planted five trees and placed a plaque in front of John's tree. The Grampians were well alight on Sunday, so we are not sure about the plight of our tree as yet. When the fires are out we will have to take a trip out to see whether it has survived. If not, we will plant another one in its place.

If you were planning on 'going bush' over the weekend, please check the Parks Victoria website to ensure that there are no fires in that area. <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/>

John's Name Mentioned in Newspapers

From the Decatur Daily News is the following article (Jan 22, 2006)

American in China Decatur art teacher visits, observes the education

By Bayne Hughes

DAILY Education Writer

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When the visitors stopped at a Chinese classroom, a boy sang a song in English.

"Country road, take me home

"To the place I belong,

"West Virginia, mountain momma,

"Take me home, country road . . ."

Near the end, his American visitors, including Decatur art teacher Tammie Jacob, joined him in the popular song by the late John Denver.

"He was so sweet," Jacob said. "I think we were all nearly in tears at the end."

Jacob teaches at Somerville Road, Walter Jackson and West Decatur elementary schools. She was one of 300 U.S. teachers, including 58 art instructors, to go to China in December on a \$3,000 grant through People to People Ambassadors.

Jacob saw the extremes of Chinese education. She observed classes in a state-of-the-art elementary school in the city, a vocational high school and a school in rural China.

She said Chinese teachers had about 45 students per class, all dressed in uniform. Their good behavior and respect for their teachers amazed her. The school had nine music teachers and eight art teachers.

Jacob said China considers art a vocation. She said the art instruction in the drawing class she watched was "very classical," although technology is now a driving force.

"There's not a lot of freedom," Jacob said. "There's not a lot of expressive art, but it's quite beautiful. They want the students to perfect the technique, and they get quite good at it."

Jacob didn't spend the entire six days in the classroom. She experienced the local cuisine, including scorpion.

"It tastes like chicken," she joked.

She compared eating the local cuisine to "Fear Factor," the American television show in which contestants eat unusual, often disgusting foods as part of the competition.

She went determined to take in the cultural and historical sites of this old city. She said one thing that stood out was an American coffeehouse at the Forbidden City.

"You know there's something inherently wrong about having a Starbucks in the Forbidden City," she said.

"Teachers ought to travel," Jacob said.

"It opens your eyes to new things and new ideas. I know I'm a better teacher because of the experience."



...And this one is from West Virginia!. As for using slogans, I can understand why sometimes there are some really

Keep 'Wild, Wonderful' as state's slogan

As other governors have before him, Joe Manchin has decided West Virginia needs a new slogan on the highway signs welcoming people to the state.

Now, West Virginia officially is "Open for Business." We like the old slogan better: "Wild, Wonderful." It's what's on our license plates, and it's what people are used to. It has stood the test of time. People recognize it, just as they recognize "Almost Heaven."

"Open for Business" is a good slogan for the state Development Office or any other agency that promotes economic activity in the state. But it's not what people think when they see our forested mountains, our whitewater rivers or our wildlife areas.

Way back in the 1990s, people stopping at the visitors' centers along the interstate highways were asked to rate several state slogans. Their No. 1 choice was "Wild and Wonderful." International visitors preferred "Almost Heaven." The late John Denver's song about West Virginia is as familiar across the oceans as it is here. Mention West Virginia to the average office worker in Tokyo, and "Almost Heaven" and "John Denver" are among the first words they say.

Some slogans stand the test of time. Some come and go. "Wild, Wonderful" or "Wild and Wonderful" have been around for years, and it will be around for years to come. West Virginians identify with it.

They like it. It describes their home. They want to keep it.

The question of a slogan ranks far down on this state's list of priorities. But it nags at us because it goes to the heart of how we see ourselves and how we want others to see us. "Wild, Wonderful" goes against the stereotype of the ignorant hillbilly. "Open for Business" is not something we want on our license plates.

Manchin probably will be governor until early 2013. When he leaves office, a new governor will either toss "Open for Business" into the trash can of discarded slogans and give us a new one, or else he will bring back "Wild, Wonderful."

We vote for "Wild, Wonderful" or "Wild and Wonderful." Either way is fine with us.

UNEP

UNEP stands for United Nations Environment Programme.

During our recent trip to Thailand we had a day to spend in Bangkok before travelling to Phuket. As part of the experience we decided to spend some time on the skytrain and to familiarise ourselves with the public transport system and to see what was in our immediate area. Tongues hanging out for a cup of coffee some hours later, we found ourselves in a middle of a photographic competition sponsored by Canon. The photos were stunning views of the environment from all over the world. We were given a booklet, which included copies of all the displayed photos. Flipping through the booklet over coffee, we realised that we had seen an exhibition of something really special. The following is an excerpt from this booklet:

"The UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) International Photographic Competition on the Environment was launched in 1991 with the support of Canon Inc. to focus attention on global environmental issues through photography. The first competition was organized to coincide with the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, in 1995, the second competition corresponded with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations; and the third, in 2000, to celebrate the new millennium. This year's Focus on Your World is the fourth competition, held to commemorate Expo 2005 Aichi, Japan, and it's theme 'Nature's Wisdom'.

Cooperating with UN support agencies, 40 international cities participated in organizing entries from Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and elsewhere around the world. This year's competition received significantly more entries than the previous event – a clear

indication to increased awareness throughout the world toward the environment today. On behalf of all UN organizations, UNEP is earnestly promoting efforts to protect the earth's rich environmental diversity."

You can all look at the wonderful photos submitted by accessing the following website.
<http://www.unep-photo.com/en/prize/general.html>

I was struck by the fact that John Denver was present at that first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. He wrote the song, **The One World** for this summit.

I included the song, **The One World** in our April Newsletter last year, but will do so again. Click the link to listen to the song

<http://www.highergroundaustralia2.com/2.html>

The One World (words & music by JD)

**Take a moment to stop and think
A moment is all it will take
Take a moment, we're on the brink
What a difference we all can make**

**It's up to us, to all of us
We simply have to try
It's up to us, to all of us
Time is passing by**

**This is the one world for all of us
The one world we ever may know
This is the one world for all of us
The blue skies the green earth below**

**This is the one world we're living in
The one world we ever may share
This is the one world we're living in
The rivers, the oceans, the air**

**This is the one world for all of us
The one world that's yours and is mine
This is the one world for all of us
A world only God could design**

**This is the one star of all the stars
The one star we wish on each night
This is the one star of all the stars
A star with it's own special light**

**This is the one world for all of us
One world we owe to the brave
This is the one world for all of us
The one world we have to save.**

You might like to also read the following article about the composer of the song Earth Day, Every Day, which John also sang.

http://www.lovestarrecords.com/lovestar_records/dov_bio.html

Irony/whaling

After looking at these photos, I could not but be moved by the photo called **The End of a Giant** submitted by Rio de Janeiro, which was the UNEP Executive Director's Special Prize.

<http://www.unep-photo.com/en/prize/unep.html>

The death of a whale is tragic, as was seen in London just last week. We must do all we can to have whaling stopped. Last week's efforts by Greenpeace should be applauded. Unfortunately they had to leave the whaling area due to the belief that someone would be killed or badly hurt if they remained.

The huge numbers of whales being harpooned in the Southern Ocean is uncalled for and it is time that we started to ask for the results of the research supposedly done on these whales.

There are a couple of questions that we should be asking.

Why do they need more than one whale if they are using these creatures for research? Surely one whale should provide them with all the information they need.

Why do they not recognise the waters that they are fishing are controlled by other nations? I was under the impression that the waters, as well as the land in the Antarctic were 'controlled' by a number of countries. Apparently the nation in question does not 'recognise' this jurisdiction.

The following story may be of interest to some of you: <http://www.ens-news.com/ens/jan2006/2006-01-19-03.asp>

Read any Good Books Lately?

I am almost finished the biography of Morley Nelson, who passed away last year. He was the bloke that featured in Let This Be A Voice. He was an expert on birds of prey and this book is an inspiration. If you get a chance to read this book, I am sure that you would enjoy it very much.

Title: Cool North Wind – Morley Nelson's Life with Birds of Prey

Author: Stephen Stuebner.

Publisher: Caxton Press, Idaho 2002

Cost: USD \$24.00

I purchased mine from Amazon

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

Sing Australia

*I come to Australia as many people do
To see the old koala, hitch a ride on a kangaroo
To hear somebody call me mate and call somebody blue
To hear the aborigine play a didgeridoo*

*Some of you came as prisoners two centuries ago
Some of you come as kings and queens your blessing to bestow
Some of you stand all swelled with pride, some with shattered wings
But all of us come with open hearts to hear Australia sing*

*In the desert, in the city
In the mountains and in the sea
In the stories and in the people
I can hear Australia sing*

*Waltzing Matilda, the men of Gallipoli
Clancy of the Overflow, Crocodile Dundee
The myth of all creation, the teaching of Baiame
The legends of a dreamtime for all eternity*

*And in this celebration of a brief two hundred years
The cost to build a nation in blood and sweat and tears
And if we stand divided, divided we will fall
But if we stand together we shall conquer all*

*In the desert, in the city
In the mountains and in the sea
In the stories and in the people
I can hear Australia sing*

*Sing Australia, Sing Australia, Sing Australia, Sing Australia
In the sails on Sydney Harbour
I can hear Australia sing*