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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – February 2006

Welcome

Welcome to our bumper newsletter this month. So many things have happened this month and I hope that I do not leave anything important out.

First and foremost, we have a number of new members who have joined us this month. Welcome to our ever expanding group and I really hope that you enjoy being part of HGA as much as we enjoy being part of the global John Denver family.

Have fun reading this newsletter.

Thanks to You!

As we start on a new year, it is timely to remember and to thank everyone involved with HGA. There are a few people that I feel should get a special mention as follows:

Huge thanks to Lynn, who is one of the two founding members of HGA and who manages our website. Our other founding member, Mark, who is no longer a member of HGA must be acknowledged for providing us with the foundation on which HGA has been built. The original group who attended the first ever gathering in 2001 have bonded incredibly and we continue to build on our experiences to improve and grow.

Thanks also to Alistair and Carmel. They organise the plaque and stone each year. Alistair and Carmel also promote HGA relentlessly as they travel around this our country roads in the Winnebago (appropriately named Almost Heaven). Alistair also found Max Moore.

A big thank you to Max, who has been a member for almost two years. As John's Australian tour manager, Max comes to us with a lifetime of stories and anecdotes that, thank goodness, have been written into a book. Max also puts us all to shame as he promotes HGA to all his friends and associates. Max, you are a hero to us all.

Thanks to Melanie who brings her guitar to our gatherings each year. Without you and your guitar, we would be subjected to me! That is not a good thought!

Thanks also to Margaret and Maureen. They are a source of great ideas and suggestions to vary

the activities and the way in which things are done within the group. Maureen, along with Helene, work hard behind the scenes with the silent auction, ensuring that all goods are assigned to the winners and that the money is collected. Without the two of you we would be really lost. Each month, I receive emails from people across the world, notifying me of John Denver related news from across the world. Without you all, we would have a very small newsletter each month. Thanks also to our ever-growing group of members. We are certainly lucky to know you all.

John Denver's Car in Australia

One of our Queensland members bought and imported a 1978 Mercury Cougar XR-7. It looks like the car has had just three owners – the first of which was John Denver. The story about this remarkable discovery is on our website.

<http://www.highergroundaustralia2.com/johnscar.html> The story of the car appeared in the Sunday Mail yesterday. You can read all about it by following this link.

http://www.thesundaymail.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5936,18112433%255E5001504,00.html Thanks to Gloria and to Lynn for sending me the link to this story – I was waiting for my paper copy to arrive in the mail this week....

Apologies for Mistake in the January Newsletter

In the January Newsletter, I made a reference to a song, which John sang at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. However, John did not write this song and credit must go to the composer of the music, Byron Janis, and the lyricist, Sammy Cahn. My deepest apologies to both gentlemen.

Furthermore, there was a reference made to a songwriter called Dov. He performed his song, Earth Day, Every Day at the Earth Summit in Rio and he was also invited to perform at the Windstar Symposium in September 1992, where he sang his Earth Day, Every Day song.

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

Here is where it gets confusing. This is not the song that John wrote entitled Earth Day, Every Day (Celebrate). Thanks also to one of our readers who not only picked up this mistake, but

let me know about it. I certainly appreciate it when these errors are brought to my attention.

Coretta Scott King

Another of our Civil Rights pioneers died on January 30th, 2006. Coretta Scott King, wife of the late Martin Luther King, was a champion of civil rights and she carried on the work of her late husband until her death. She campaigned for establishing Martin Luther King's birthday (January 15th) as a public holiday in the United States. You might like to read more about Coretta Scott King's life in by clicking on this link.

<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/kin1bio-1>

Clean Up Australia Day

March 5th is Clean Up Australia Day. This is the day when whole communities get together to work as a team to clean up a section of their local area.

Businesses and schools can also take part in Clean Up Australia Day.

With the Commonwealth Games soon to start in Melbourne, the clean up has already begun in the areas where high volumes of people are expected. It is sad to think that we have come to having to commit one day in the year to clean up our beautiful country. If we were all responsible for our own rubbish, Clean Up Australia Day would not be necessary. The most 'picked up' items include plastic bags and cigarette butts.

Here is the link for people wishing to find a group to join on Clean Up Australia Day.

<http://www.cleanup.com.au/Main.asp?RequestType=Homepage&SubRequestType=Internet>

I will be down on the Barwon River in Geelong that day, monitoring the bins at the Head of the School Girls rowing regatta. If anyone is in the area on that day, come down and give the girls your support. You will easily find us as we are the ones who are yelling and screaming support for our girls....

Winter Olympic Games, Torino, Italy

I can assure you that there will be little sleep for our Sports-Mad Aussies over the next month as we are now watching the Winter Olympics. Australia won our first ever gold medals at the last Olympics at Salt Lake City and we are sending our largest Winter Olympic team to Torino.

In 1984, John Denver sang his song, The Gold and Beyond at the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo as a member of the ABC (USA) coverage team of these games. I love the song and I often wish that it was released on more albums than the Greatest Hits 3.

THE GOLD AND BEYOND

Words by John Denver, Music by John Denver & Lee Holdridge

**On a snow crystal morning
Some place close to heaven
On the side of a mountain
In a race for the sun
In a matter of moments
The dream of a lifetime is won**

**There's a fire in the heart
And it feels like the hunger
The spirit is burning
Consumed by the flame
To be one of the best
Of the best in the world is its name**

**To go faster and farther
Than anyone's ever before
To be braver and stronger
And truer and then even more
To be all that you can be
And all that you've ever longed for**

**In the eyes of the mountain
All people are equal
In the eyes of all people
Our souls can be seen
In the course of our struggle
We'll know what humanity means**

**To be all that you can be
And all that you've ever longed for
We gather together
To face one another
We gather in silence
And sing for the sun
We gather in peace - to Go for the Gold and
Beyond**

Happy Birthday - February

Happy [belated] Birthday to Marina Green for Wednesday, 15th February. May all your wishes come true.



Freezing Her Butt Off

Janice left warm and sunny NSW for New York on 15th January. She will be spending five months there with family. I received an email from her last week, outlining the things she has done and she also mentioned how mild the weather had been. Janice, welcome to New York! Apparently the Big Apple is in the middle of a Big Freeze. Stay warm and when you thaw out a little, don't forget about your John Denver friends in Australia.

When the weather gets a little better, Janice might send us a photo of John's bench in Central Park.



2006 Annual John Denver Gathering

Please put the weekend of the 13th – 15th October into your diaries. These are the dates for our annual John Denver weekend. This year it will be held in Queensland, near Brisbane. We will be making some firm decisions soon in regard to the venue for the weekend. For those who would like to join us, we will be requesting deposits for the accommodation and for the food as soon as the venue has been finalised.

Read any Good Books Lately?

I finally finished the biography of Morley Nelson, who passed away last year. Cool North Wind – Morley Nelson's Life with Birds of Prey by Stephen Steubner (Caxton Press Idaho 2002 – USD \$24.00).

It is unbelievable how many issues Morley Nelson dealt with over the years, including the banning of the use of DDT due to the chemicals causing the shells of the eagles eggs to become too thin, causing the death of unhatched chicks and the redesign of electricity poles to ensure that eagles were not electrocuted due to touching wires.

It is an inspiring book to read and is a must for any bird-loving people out there.

Collages

Linda has moved her collages to the following address.

<http://www.picturetrail.com/sweetdreamsplace>

Take a look at the wonderful work Linda does. Linda also sent me the following link, which I had never seen before. It features a story about John published in the 1970's

<http://www.stuckinthe70s.com/images/tb0774denver.jpg>

Linda has also sent along her latest song page. The beautiful Autograph!

<http://www.freewebs.com/sweetdreamsplace/autograph.html>

New Video Clip/Netherlands Site

Each month Michiel places a new John Denver video clip on his website. These video clips are wonderful reminders of how versatile John was. Please visit this site at least once a month to check out the new clip.

<http://home.wanadoo.nl/mtenbrug/denver/main.htm>

Thanks to Michiel for his dedication to the memory of John and big thanks to Netty who alerts us all when the new clips are posted to the site.

While you are looking at this site, please click the link to the bearforest project, which Michiel and Netty have raised enough money to pay for two parcels of land at the Ouwehands Zoo in Rhenen in Holland. This land is set aside for bears, which have been saved from circus' from Turkey, Bosnia, Turkey and Russia. These parcels of land are dedicated to John's memory.

<http://www.higherground.nl/BerenbosKavelVoorJohnDenver/index-EN.htm>

Update From Our Members

Thom from NSW has contacted me to say that the tree at Barrington Tops has 'disappeared' and he would like to replace it as soon as possible on our behalf. I have contacted the people from Riverwood Downs by email, but there has been no response from them so far. I will call them this week to organise the replacement of the tree.

Ursula visited Mogo on New Year's Eve. The trees are doing well and buds were forming on the trees.

Helen is regularly checking the trees in Boonah and they are also doing well. I know that Max has also visited them recently.

Thank goodness for our friends who are looking out for John's trees.

Windstar Australia Connection

Good news for the Windstar Australia Connection group. After an initial glitch last year when there were a few changes, the group has gained a number of new members and they are working on their first meeting for the year. We would like to thank the American Connection groups and Ron for their patience with us and we look forward to moving ahead now at a good pace.

Windstar Chat

Regardless of whether you are a Windstar member or not, you can join Ron Deutschendorf on the 25th February from 9.00am – 11am Pacific Time. <http://www.john-denver.org/chat/start.asp>

If you cannot get online at that time, you can open the site a day or two before and leave questions that you would like Ron to answer for you. This is a wonderful service that is provided to the friends of John Denver a number of times a year. The transcript of the chat is available later at the above address if you would like to read through it. There are often many interesting issues discussed, but most importantly, Ron is most eloquent about his vision for the future of the Windstar Foundation. Personally, I think it is a wonderful gesture by Ron and it certainly helps to keep the spirit of John's vision alive.

Annual Musical Tribute to John Denver

The 9th annual musical tribute to John Denver will be held on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th October, 2006 at the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen Colorado.

This is early warning, but for those who are planning on going to Aspen this year, keep it in mind.

For Sale – Sheet Music

I think the price of these is in US dollars, but please ask Mel via email if you are interested in any of the following:

MStein100@aol.com

I have the following sheet music with JOHN DENVER'S photo on the cover for sale @\$12 a piece. They are all in excellent condition.

1. Downhill Stuff
2. It Makes Me Giggle
3. Annie's Song
4. Back Home Again
5. Please Daddy
6. The Flower that Shattered the Stone
7. How Can I Leave you Again

If you are interested in acquiring these, please send me an e-mail and I will let you know where to send payment. I will hold these for 48 hours, after which I will offer them to someone else.

Respectfully Yours,

MEL STEINMETZ

Bushfires

As many of you know, Victoria has suffered badly from the effects of bushfires recently. These fires raged in many parts of the state and although one was the effect of a lightning strike, the others were deliberately lit by humans. When things like this happen, it is easy to lose faith in humans, until you see the selfless and wonderful work of the volunteer fire-fighters, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the individuals who go out of their way to help those in need.

Of course, many of these actions would not be necessary if the Department of the Environment and Sustainability would simply do their job of look after the environment and sustaining the natural habitat of our fauna and flora by simply maintaining what we have to preserve it. Many Australian native plants rely on fire to open the very hard cases of their seed pods, but by the same token, we do not need to have entire forests and bushlands destroyed for this purpose.

Regular back-burning reduces the leaf litter and any other naturally-occurring rubbish that gathers on our forest floors. Back-burning should also be carried out on a rotational basis during cooler months of the year prior to summer. By reducing the litter on the forest floor, we are reducing the fuel that a fire can use, giving our fire-fighters a better chance of controlling a bushfire. It is no good closing the gate after the horse has bolted – controlled back-burning in Victoria at the wrong time of the year by the aforementioned department has also resulted in devastating uncontrollable bush fires. In many respects the Greenies have been responsible for the decisions made by our Governments. If the Greenies had any respect at all for our native flora and fauna they would be asking the government to reinstate controlled back-burning during the Spring season each year.

The largest casualties of our recent bushfires were the injured and starving native animals. Rescue shelters across the state were gathering injured native animals such as koalas, kangaroos, possums, lizards, wombats, wallabies, just to name a few and were trying to relieve burns and dreadful ulcers caused by the fires. After a fire ravages an area, surviving wildlife moves closer to towns to find food as their own supplies have been destroyed. They then become vulnerable to being hit by cars and being attacked by dogs and cats.

Colleen Wood of Rawson (north of Moe, Gippsland) takes in and cares for injured animals. Although there is fantastic co-ordination between refuges and many more animals are surviving due to early intervention and care by these groups, they do it the hard way. These wildlife rescue refuges are non-profit and receive no government funding. If you know of a wildlife refuge [or country vet] in your area, and you are in a position to donate either time, money or other goods, such as old towels, sheets, cages, etc please give them a call. I am sure they would be delighted to hear from you. Places badly affected by bushfires include the Grampians (Halls Gap, Stawell, Ararat), Anakie, Gippsland, Beechworth.

Environmental Issues

Peter Andrews

Our ABC features a series called Australian Story. It features the extraordinary lives of some very ordinary people. In light of the droughts, which in some areas have been continuing for many years, one man stood up against ridicule to prove that the landscape can be changed to improve the soil by simply using weeds. Please meet Peter Andrews – a man who has struggled against the odds and at the eleventh hour has finally been recognised for the work he has done to reverse the effects of drought on the land. Despite everything that happened to him, he never gave up on his beliefs.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2005/s1384063.htm>

Our environment is the only legacy that we have for our children and grandchildren. Many people think that the damage we have inflicted on the environment is permanent, but Peter Andrew's story displays that where there is life, there is hope.

Plastic Bags

As many of you know we were recently in Thailand and Cambodia. One of the things that struck me was the readiness in which plastic bags are given out. I do not kid you when I tell you that there is a plastic bag made for every purchase. As many countries across the world are reducing the numbers of bags used, some parts of the world are using more than what are necessary. What I found hard was the fact that you could not refuse the bag. They would not put your purchases in a bag that you already had. I must admit it was very hard to accept.

However, during a trip to see the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, I brought home with me the most ingenious use of recycled newspaper I have ever seen. At a mobile post office van at one of the temples, I purchased some postcards and stamps to send home to my relatives. The

postcards were placed in one parcel and the stamps in another. Using the daily tourist newspaper, which was made from a heavy duty newsprint they had made envelopes of various sizes for the products they sold. These envelopes were handmade (hopefully by some of the landmine victims) and instead of using glue or sticky-tape to seal the ends, the unusable border that you find around the edges of the sheets of stamps were used.

It was an ingenious way of recycling



It is Easy Being Green

Kermit the Frog often lamented that it was not that easy being green, but we all know better than that. The first step to going green is to buy some 'green' supermarket bags.

We have reduced the use of plastic in our home to the basic minimum and I must admit that we are better for it. Plastic bags present a huge environmental problem and their use should be reduced as much as possible. There are a number of towns in Australia that are certified plastic bag free, including Mogo, where we held our John Denver weekend last year. Here are some facts about plastic bags: (source of this information is Planet Ark www.planetark.com)

Every year 20 million Australians use around 5 billion plastic check-out bags.

A person's use of a plastic check-out bag can be counted in minutes – however long it takes to get from the shops to their homes. Plastic bags however, can take between 15 and 1000 years to break down in the environment.

In the marine environment plastic bag litter is lethal, killing at least 100,000 birds, whales, seals and turtles every year. After an animal is killed by plastic bags its body decomposes and the plastic is released back into the environment where it can kill again.

A Bryde's whale died on a Cairns beach after ingesting 6 square metres of plastic - including plastic bags. Such obstructions in animals can cause severe pain, distress and death.

On land, plastic bag litter can block drains and trap birds. They also kill livestock. One farmer near Mudgee NSW, carried out an autopsy on a dead calf and found 8 plastic bags in its stomach. The loss of this calf cost the farmer around \$500.

Plastic bags are not free to consumers – they are actually adding an estimated \$173 million a year to Australia's grocery bills.

At least 80 million plastic bags end up as litter on our beaches, streets and parks. Australian local and State Governments spend over \$200 million a year picking up litter.

Not all litter is deliberate. 47% of wind borne litter escaping from landfills is plastic – much of this is plastic bags.

Over 200,000 plastic check-out bags are dumped in landfills every hour.

Only 5% of Australia's plastic bags are currently being recycled, despite recycling facilities being available at major supermarkets.

In many council areas, plastic bags are the single main contaminant of kerbside recycling.

Plastic bags are a by-product of the oil industry. Over 3 billion HDPE plastic bags are imported into Australia every year.

Since March 2002, Ireland has reduced its plastic check-out bag usage by 90% and in April 2003 Coles Bay in Tasmania successfully banned plastic check-out bags in all their retail stores. In the first twelve months, Coles Bay stopped the use of 350,000 plastic check-out bags.

Planet Ark has since worked with the communities of Huskisson, Kangaroo Valley, Mogo and Oyster Bay in NSW and Birregurra, Cannon's Creek, Metung and Murtoa in Victoria to help them also become Plastic Bag Free Towns.

Over 10 million reusable bags have now been sold by Coles, Woolworths and Safeway stores. At only \$1 each, they're a cheap way to save Australia's wildlife!

Good News

The good news is that you can do something about it. Here are some tips to help you reduce your plastic bag usage:

1. Use reusable bags, boxes, shopping trolleys or a backpack for your shopping.
2. Say 'NO' to plastic bags at the check-out if you only have a few items.
3. Reuse plastic bags you have accumulated as garbage liners
4. Open your eyes to how many plastic shopping bags you have at home. Keep count and try to reduce the number you take home.

5. Spread the word. Ask your local shops to stock plastic bag alternatives if they don't already and encourage friends and family to also get involved.

TIP: After you unpack your groceries at home, make sure you put your reusable bags straight back on the front seat of your car or at your front door. That way, you won't forget them the next time you shop!

Re-useable Bags

Coles and Woolworths supermarkets have now sold over 10 million reusable bags. Here are some of the reasons why people are making the switch to reusable bags:

- Reusable bags are comfortable to carry and they're kinder to your fingers than plastic bags.
- They hold 2-3 times more items than a plastic check-out bag – so you have fewer bags to carry!
- They last for years and won't split like a thin plastic bag.
- They're a stylish and practical bag for shopping or trips to the beach, the CBD, picnics and the park (not sure about the stylish bit, but they certainly are popular)

You can purchase a 'Go Green' bag at Coles, Bi-Lo and Woolworths supermarkets – at only \$1 each, they're a cheap way to save Australia's wildlife and our pockets

Editor's Note: I have been using green bags for some years now and I swear by them. They come to the market and supermarket with me each week. So far, some of my bags have been used in excess of 200 times. Another advantage is that the solid base of the bag sits neatly in the boot of the car, so no more groceries rolling around your boot when you turn a corner. Such has been the success of the green bags for supermarkets, that many people entering the supermarket are carrying their own bags. This is a result of a voluntary approach as few stores are charging a fee for bags.

Additional to the green supermarket bags, I have a couple of others that I keep in the car for other shopping, such as clothes, etc. The stores are only too obliging when you say you do not want plastic bags. They will usually wrap your purchases in tissue paper (for clothes) before putting in the reusable bag. Cotton On in Australia have their own reusable bags for a purchase price of \$1.00. This is donated to breast cancer research. Myer sell theirs for an upmarket price of \$2.20, with \$1.00 being donated to Clean Up Australia.



For further information about plastic bags, please visit the Planet Ark site <http://www.planetark.com/>

Now, if Planet Ark and the governments could put as much emphasis on the abuse of disposable napkins, we would be heading in the right direction toward a cleaner and safer environment for us all.

**When green is all there is to be
It could make you wonder why,
But why wonder why wonder,
I am green and it'll do fine,
It's beautiful
And I think it's what I want to be
(Joe Raposo)**

Tsunami Report – Phuket, Thailand

We were in Phuket exactly one year after the devastating tsunami hit on 26th December 2004. Much of Phuket has recovered and you would hardly know that this destruction took place just one year ago. The people who were the most affected – business people and residents along the beach front readily showed photos of the damage and were more than willing to talk about the day of the tsunami. There is no doubt that the emotional fallout of this disaster will last for many years. However, it was also great to see that the tourists are back and are supporting the local people as they start to rebuild their lives, homes and businesses.

This photo was taken from our hotel balcony. By the way, our hotel was called the Montana Grand.



JD in Melbourne Newspaper – twice

On February 4th 2006, Neil Kearney's Saturday article was about the first day of school for the children of under extraordinary circumstances. One featured a 12 year old boy who returned to school after fighting leukaemia, another story was about migrant boys from Timor whose first day at a private school on a scholarship was a result of hard work and the dedication of Friday Night school and the third story was about twin girls, one of whom is blind and both have multiple disabilities, started school for the very first time. Following is an excerpt from that article:

...“J” was feeling similarly buoyant when I called her after her children's first school day. A John Denver song was playing loudly in the background.

‘T loves John Denver,’ “J” explained. “It must be the vibration from the banjo”.

Wasn't that nice????

The second one was a small article in the Melbourne paper about the car that one of our members purchased recently.



Aussies Find Lost World

On February 8th it was reported that a group of Australian, American and Indonesian scientists have found a 'lost world' in Irian Jaya [Indonesian Papua New Guinea]. Isolated, this almost inaccessible area is home to many new species never seen anywhere else in the world. The following link is to the original story:

<http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/printpage/0,5481,18074956,00.html>

New JD Screen Saver

Linda has recently added a new screensaver to her site. If anyone is interested in downloading it, the instructions are on her site.

<http://www.geocities.com/lsettel/jdscreensavers.html>

Harrison Ford in Australia

As many of you know, Harrison Ford has been visiting Australia this week, promoting his new movie. If any of you have ever seen Arctic Dance: The Mardie Murie Story, you would have experienced the full extent of Harrison Ford's talent as an actor.

Eagles in Australia

Our annual donation to an eagle rehabilitation facility is guided by criteria, which has evolved over the past five years. We have given to the Taronga Zoo in NSW, Healesville Sanctuary in Vic, Australian Native Animal Care in QLD and Birdland in NSW. We are currently looking into one or two places in South East Queensland, which will receive the proceeds of the 2006 silent auction.

Over the past two years, we have really concentrated on looking for facilities that are smaller and that receive little or no government funding. We also look at the specific needs of the facility as these can vary significantly. We feel that over the past two years, our contribution has made a difference to both Australian Native Animal Care and to Birdland. We have also been rewarded by our association with these organisations. Being smaller than the mainstream zoo, we have been able to get to know the operators, which has been great.

In 2004, we experienced the release of a hawk and a wedge-tail eagle. This was a once-in-a-lifetime thrill and one that I will never forget. It is incredibly rewarding to see the way in which people dedicate so much of their time to ensure that these majestic birds are returned to the wild, wherever possible.

There are some good works being done all over Australia with raptor rehabilitation work, and we acknowledge how difficult it is with little funding. We are unable to help everyone, but we certainly do love to hear of success stories whenever they occur. Currently, we select a facility in the state in which our annual JD weekend will be held and we do ensure that all facilities that we donate to are open to public access. It is hoped that our contribution will help educate others in sustaining and protecting our precious wildlife.

Challenger Space Shuttle Disaster

On 28th January it was the 20th anniversary of the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster. The five men and two women – including the first teacher in space – were just over one minute into their flight from Cape Canaveral in Florida when the Challenger exploded. We should also remember that the 1st February was the 3rd anniversary of the Columbia Shuttle disaster. Seven crew members were killed as the shuttle disintegrated on re-entry of the Earth's atmosphere.

The following passage, written by John was later published in the book, The Complete Lyrics, page 86 (edited by Milt Okun).

"I suppose just about everyone knows of my desire to fly in space and, to some degree, about the small role I played in the Citizen in Space program for NASA. I had followed the development of that program with great interest, and was thrilled for Christa McAuliffe in anticipation of her flight. I was in Georgetown, Colorado. Working on "The Christmas Gift" when I got an emergency call from my son Zak, who shared my enthusiasm for our space effort and who knew how close I had come to being able to fly. He told me what had happened to the Challenger....."

It was late that night after a long day of work, before I was able to sit down and watch what had occurred and listen to all that was being said about this great tragedy. I know that everyone who saw or read or listened was touched by the loss of the Challenger and her valiant crew. None more deeply than I. As often occurs for me in moments of intense emotional stress, I found my guitar and I was playing a sort of musical meditation, which became the beginning of the song. Through the course of the evening I wrote the song, not only for Christa and her fellow crew members, but for all of those who have worked behind the scenes to make it possible – from the Wright Brothers to Wernher von Braun, from Lindbergh to Yuri Gagarin to Neil Armstrong, and countless others who carried in their hearts a dream of the stars and whose names will never be known. Truly, they were flying for all of us – they were flying for me."

Last year, at our annual gathering in Australia, Peter McCall (John's security advisor for the Australian leg of the One World tour) provided us with this wonderful memory of the song, Flying for Me. Although I included it in our October newsletter, I feel that it is worth reading again this month as we remember the 20th anniversary of the Challenger and the third anniversary of the Columbia (1st February, 2003) shuttle disasters.

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 what is arguably the greatest rock record ever produced – 'Hot August Night' starring Neil Diamond. Lee is a musical powerhouse in America writing many symphonies, and of course, soundtrack music for films and television miniseries.

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, Dolly Parton, 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 Shuttle disaster. He also told us that he was the civilian member chosen for that ill-fated trip but President Reagan 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 very brave astronauts. The orchestra led and John started singing, but half way through the rendition he had a great deal of difficulty singing the words being overcome with much emotion. Lee, being the consummate professional that he is knew immediately what had happened and swelled the orchestra over John and his 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.

A great amount of discussion took place in John's dressing room during interval about 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 where 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 microphone 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 moments 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. When I think of John and the happiness he gave to so 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 Australia

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Flying For Me

John Denver

Well, I guess that you probably know by now
I was one who wanted to fly
I wanted to ride on that arrow of fire right up into heaven
And I wanted to go for every man, every child, every mother of children
I wanted to carry the dreams of all people right up to the stars

And I prayed that I'd find an answer there, or maybe I'd find a song
Giving a voice to all the hearts that cannot be heard
And for all the ones who live in fear, and all those who stand apart
My being there would bring us a little step closer together

They were flying for me; they were flying for every one
They were trying to see a brighter day for each and every one
They gave us their light
They gave us their spirit and all they could be
They were flying for me, they were flying for me

And I wanted to wish on the Milky Way
And dance upon a falling star
I wanted to give myself and free myself and join myself with it all
Given the chance to dream it can be done
The promise of tomorrow is real
Children of the spaceship earth, the future belongs to us all

She was flying for me; she was flying for every one
She was flying to see a brighter day for each and everyone
She gave us her light,
She gave us her spirit and all she can be
She was flying for me
They were flying for me
They were flying for every one
They were trying to see a brighter day for each and every one
They gave us their light
They gave us their spirit and all they could be
They were flying for me