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# HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – October 2006

## Welcome

Welcome to our October newsletter. We celebrated John Denver's life and music in Boonah, SE Queensland last weekend. I think I speak for all those who attended the weekend when I say that a wonderful time was had by all. More details about the different activities we conducted throughout the weekend will be included in this newsletter, so sit back, take your shoes off and read on....



## Boonah 2006

As many of you know, we returned to Boonah, Queensland this year to celebrate John Denver's life and music. The venue includes a large kitchen/living area, perfect for our activities and sleeping accommodation in one building.

Situated just one hour from Brisbane, it is a delightful rural setting and it is a perfect location for people coming from interstate as it is not too far to travel.

We started to arrive shortly before lunchtime on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> October, and although there was a short delay in accessing our accommodation, we quickly made up some sandwiches and had a light lunch in the shade of Alistair and Carmel's 'Lumbago'.

The afternoon was lazy as we caught up with everyone's news and we welcomed a new member, John Barry when he arrived with the Mercury Cougar, which was once owned by John Denver. This caused much excitement as John explained how he came to purchase the car and then later found out who the first owner was.

After a shared dinner, we held our annual general meeting, where decisions are made for the coming year(s) in regard to Higher Ground Australia. The AGM gives new comers an idea of how we operate, and is a forum through which ideas and events are discussed.

This year, a cake was donated to HGA by one of the local businesses. It had been decorated and was in the shape of John Denver's face. We agreed to cut it the following night at our sing-a-long.

The following morning we were up bright and early to start a new day. The promise of attending the local Saturday morning market was alluring. One enterprising local decided to pull out their John Denver related odds and ends to sell at the market. Needless to say, it was a good move as all JD items were snapped up by our members.

A visit to the market by the rest of us, some being driven in John's car (what an experience) and Maureen managed to advertise our sing-a-long through the local radio station.



The rest of the day was at leisure, although some of us went to visit the local lavender farm and the 'boys' went down to prepare the ground for the tree planting, which was to take place the following day.

By this time our other members had arrived, the items for the silent auction were ready, the peace cloth was displayed and our peace-cloth panel was ready to be decorated. Dinner was eaten and we prepared for our annual sing-a-long. We had decided to run a 'back to school' theme for a gold coin donation, and found that those who dressed in their school clothes must have had a distorted view of school days as they were quite a motley bunch, not to mention, badly behaved!



And the fun began...

As well as our regular guitarists, we were joined by Hannah, another local guitarist and Beverley, an accordion player. The addition of the accordion brought a new dimension to the music and we thank Beverley for coming along.



As the night wore on, we announced the winner of the raffle prizes, the book prizes and the winning bids for the silent auction. Max was given the honour of cutting the John Denver cake, a task that he approached with trepidation.



The sing-a-long finished at about 3.30am and I think the only reason why we went to bed at that point was the realisation that we had to be up early the following morning for the 'formal' part of the weekend, which is to plant the trees and read our letters from other JD groups from around the world.

The following morning, after an earlyish breakfast, and Max safely in John's car, we left for the Information Centre, where our trees were to be planted. The holes were already dug but we had to decide on where each of our five trees was to be located.

After reading the letters and messages from our friends We planted five trees, including a tree planted in memory of Steve Irwin. All trees were watered, using water that we had each brought from our homes and symbolically poured into the buckets for this purpose.



We also want to thank Helen for the donation of the trees and Michelle for donating the mulch.

A photo shoot, which included all our friends together before returning to Outlook



After lunch, we had to sadly farewell each other as we went our separate ways to go home.

### **Winners are Grinners!**

The Raffle raised \$110.00 and the proceeds of the raffle go towards paying for the plaques, the trees and the materials used for protecting the trees from kangaroo damage.

This year, the raffle had two prizes, the first was an original painting of the eagle we sponsored and named last year – Spirit. This was painted and donated by Jan Fleming.



**Spirit was won by Helen Denmar.**

The second prize was an eagle print, donated by Carolyn Johnson, on behalf of Frank.

It was won by **John Barry**

### **Book Giveaway**

Thanks to everyone who entered their school or kindergarten to the annual book giveaway. We had a very 'Queensland' book giveaway this year, as all three books were won by Queensland schools. The three picture story books illustrated by Christopher Canyon were given to:

**Sunshine on my Shoulders:** Wellers Hill Primary, Tarragindi, nominated by the Rennison and Gilby families

**Ancient Rhymes:** All Saints School, Boonah, nominated by Jo Nastasi

**Take me Home Country Roads:** Boronia Heights State School, nominated by John Barry.

### **Silent Auction**

Our silent auction raised a total of \$1370 on the night. We have since received some other donations so the total has risen substantially. Once the money has been counted, we will tell you the total amount of money that will be donated to Broadwings Rehabilitation and Conservation Centre in Nerang, Queensland.

100% of the proceeds of the auction are donated to the rehabilitation of eagles. Any other money that is donated is also added to this total.

We have almost received all of the outstanding money from the auction, so your items will be soon in your hot little hands.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the silent auction – this has been successful again in 2006.

### **Thanks:**

I have been flat out since the JD weekend, so please accept my apology for not thanking the people who have contributed to our weekend so generously.

It would be impossible for one person to organise a weekend like the one we have just had. Thanks to the people who organised the accommodation and food, the people who donated items for the silent auction and raffle, and those who have given money. Special thanks to Linda, who organises the letters between Aspen and Australia.

### **Merchandise**

We have some 2007 calendars, keyrings, notebooks and puzzle books still left. Please contact Lynn if you are interested in any of these items on [lmagann@optusnet.com.au](mailto:lmagann@optusnet.com.au)

### **DVDs**

Lynn has created some wonderful DVDs using images from the last five HGA gatherings. Priced at just \$20.00, these are well worth owning.

Please contact Lynn on [lmagann@optusnet.com.au](mailto:lmagann@optusnet.com.au) for further details. All proceeds from the sale of the DVDs will be donated to eagle rehabilitation

### **Higher Ground Australia Website**

The website will be updated over the coming days. Lynn has taken a well-earned break with her family since the JD weekend, so she has been away from the computer for the past couple of weeks. I hope she has had a wonderful holiday.

### **John Denver Memorial Peace Cloth**

We thank the organisers of the John Denver Memorial Peace Cloth for the opportunity of having the panel for our annual weekend. We had a great place to display it and the panel drew many comments.



### **Messages from our friends**

**It is always wonderful to get some feedback from our friends.**

Hi Everyone,

Now that I've settled back into this mad house, I wanted to write to you all and say thank you for a wonderful weekend. Especially, thank you for 'Frank's tree'. I have phoned and sent photos to his children and they said what lovely people you must be..... I didn't tell them the whole story about you all! Janette has sent me some photos - and one for me to forward to the Bishop! I still have a job, but it took him a while to wipe the smile off his face. Again, thanks for a great weekend and hope everyone is well. Love, Carolyn.

Hello all,

I would like to thank everyone for making myself and my wife Tracey welcome at the Boonah gathering.

I had a good time it was great to meet so many interesting people look forward to future encounters. Although I was a bit hesitant about how we were going to be accepted, once there we were made to feel comfortable at the event.

I hope a good time was had by all it is easy to see why John Denver events around the world have so much support. My friend Shari Sullivan who

lives in Colorado Springs has kept me up to date with the event in Aspen. I am looking forward to hopefully going to next years event in the U.S. If not, then I will driving the car to Alice Springs in September 2007 as it will be thirty years since John made a television show JOHN DENVER IN AUSTRALIA. If any one could help me out with some information on a particular part of Alice Springs that John enjoyed more than others let me know as I am considering organising a plaque or tree out there in John's honour as there is a lot of interest for the car Australia wide, so 2007 we could end up touring around to events all over the country.

We unfortunately only managed to get a few pictures over the weekend so if possible could anyone send some pics for us to view?.

John Denver's car will be included in a motor show at the Brisbane R.N.A. Exhibition Grounds late November. Other than that I will be taking the car to small events around Brisbane as I enjoy going to the outings as so many people have memories and recollections of John and his music to talk about.

[www.johndenverscar.tk](http://www.johndenverscar.tk)

Regards

John Barry

***John, I will post you a CD of photos during the week. Thanks for bringing the car and allowing us all to ride, be photographed in and drool over.***

### **Tree for Steve Irwin**

We planted a lovely red bottle brush in memory of Steve Irwin. Steve was an avid environmentalist and educator. His loss was a terrible tragedy to the world. Steve's tree has a plaque placed in front and is located to the left of John's tree. Our trees are located at the rear of the Information Centre in Boonah and are easily accessible by anyone passing through the township of Boonah.



### **Letter from Aspen**

Greetings to our Australian Friends....

Another year has passed, and October 12th has come around again... finding so many of us gathered together to remember and celebrate the life of someone very special to all of us. John Denver means many things to many people, and even though he is not with us here in body - his spirit shines through the smiles of everyone gathered here at Maroon Bells just outside of Aspen, Colorado.

For nine years we have grown friendships that have become more like a family, with people from all over not only our own country, but all over the world. As we share our time together here in Aspen, we know that part of our family is in Australia doing the same thing we are - strengthening a bond that grows stronger and wider each year. Our wish for you this year is that you will continue to keep the legacy that John Denver created alive - through environmental awareness, through sharing his music, and by making a difference in your own backyards.

All of us being together here, and around the world, and working together to make sure that the world is a better place, is certainly evidence of what one man and one woman can do. We are all that one man, and that one woman, and we are all proud to share that legacy with all of you. As we sing around our campfire tonight, we will be singing his songs for you and looking forward to the time when we all sing them together.

Shari Sullivan, Harold Simpson

### **Letters from Pacific Grove**

To our fellow John Denver devotees in Aspen and Australia:

We come together here in Pacific Grove for the 9th anniversary of the tragic end to John Denver's life. But as with all the years before, we come to celebrate his life and life's work. Even so, I am always haunted by the fact that we stand only a little more than 100 yards from the 18th fairway of the Pacific Grove Golf Course, a perfect landing field... and the thoughts of what might have been. Today is a picture perfect day: blue sky, deep blue ocean, sunny, and little wind. The type of day John might have written about.

As we reflect on John's life and music, I think about some of the lyrics that would start me thinking, then and now. As we remember the 5th anniversary of 9/11, I reflect on John's accidentally prophetic line from *Rhymes and Reasons*: "...though the cities start to crumble and the towers fall around us..."

As the first of the Baby Boomers from World War II are hitting their early sixties, I am reminded of

the line from *Poems, Prayers and Promises*: "...it turns me on to think of growing old...." Only John would have written that, but it was probably easier to write at 28 than it would have been at 60, as he was a Baby Boomer also. Yes, his music has meant a lot to every one of us.

And in this world of seemingly constant challenges and sometimes very gruesome news, John left us with words to live by and give us hope.

The first that comes to mind is: "No one person has to do it all, but if each one of us follows our heart and our own inclinations, we will find the small things that we can do and together we will come up with enough to create a sustainable future and a healthy environment."

The last that comes to mind today seems most important: "No matter what language we speak, no matter what color we are, no matter the form of our politics, or the expression of our faith...we all live under the same moon and stars and we're not so very far apart."

Peace from Pacific Grove my friends.

Dave Singletary

**To Our John Denver Friends in Aspen, Australia, and all over the world:**

**Singing Skies and Dancing Waters to all of you, who join with us today in the celebration of John Denver...a singer/songwriter, environmentalist, international peacemaker, deep sea-explorer, fighter of hunger, and so much more! John lived his passions, found incredible success - then parlayed that success into a life of prolific songwriting and service to our planet. We really miss you, John, and that special JD energy you brought to all your endeavors.**

**Yet your legacy, John, is very much alive, still bringing gifts to those who cherish your memory. Your songs live on, across the airwaves, with their catchy melodies and soothing themes. And for those who have deeply explored your music, an even greater gift has been unearthed: a plethora of songs that are beautiful, wise, prophetic and profound.**

**Imagine our lives if John had never appeared. For many, that concept is unthinkable and mortifying, as John, through his music, has been a good friend through the decades, and still holds our hand in trying times. We have been truly blessed to have known him both as a person, and through the boundless gift of his music.**

**Thank you, John, for all you have brought, and still bring, to us. Today we again feel your eternal love, and surely we will eternally love you.**

**(George Schumer)**

Dear friends of John Denver in Aspen, Australia, and, really, all over the world:

This time is more than a remembrance. It is a joining of hands, hearts, minds and spirits in the realm of love that John sang about, dwelt in and stirred in each one of us in his songs, his records, his concerts and his TV specials.

He touched in us also a supreme vision of protecting the beauty of this land, and of appreciation for the natural world.

While we miss him terribly, we have found a wider family of those who come together at this time and others whose lives we touch as we talk to them about what we are doing, what we love and what has inspired us! How many people have you told what you are doing this weekend, to have them admit they liked John Denver's songs, to want to know more!

To keep John's dreams alive is the greatest legacy and the highest honoring of John possible. Thus we continue to carry his light as our own.

As John sang, "In the darkest of nights you are never, ever alone." We always have each other. And we have the spirit, the love and the commitment that John pointed to, constantly. Forever grateful for the connection and support in keeping his dreams and his music alive.

The Legacy Continues.

Hochima Treppa

**Letters from New Zealand**

Hello,

To all our Australian friends. What a year it has been for all of us and the peoples of the planet - terrorism, tsunamis, sudden change.

Yet recently the words of "Amazon" keep resonating within -

There is a vision that SHINES in the darkness. That one vision is all of our dreams.

In spite of all that goes on around us there is LIGHT/HOPE upon the earth and that LIGHT cannot be extinguished - leading us on to be all that we can be, not what we are.

October is always very special for us to think of John (I often take time off work to reflect). Yet recent events, meaning the passing of Steve Irwin, have shown that they both represent how we all can be.

I remember when John died there was a message on the internet exhorting why he and Princess Di aroused such feelings of love and hate. It was because they were such authentic people - some folk couldn't cope with it. I read an article recently with Steve echo-ing the same explanation.

Let's be "true as the tide, free as the wind swell, joyful and loving, and letting it be."

Have a great time.

Susan Leaver

for THE INTERNATIONAL JOHN DENVER MEMORIAL FOUNDATION OF NEW ZEALAND

## **Letters from Us in Australia**

*Music makes pictures and often tells stories  
All of it magic and all of it true  
And all of these pictures and all of the stories  
And all of the magic the music is you*

Hello to our friends from across the world,

Music is the greatest gift that could be given to a person and John Denver not only had the gift of playing the guitar beautifully, but also the gift of writing meaningful lyrics.

Music is everywhere – in a bird's song, in the clackety clack of a train on tracks, in the rustling of leaves, in the wind. John had the ability to express these and more as he told his stories through the medium of song.

The power of music is incredible – and the passion with which John expressed himself helps us all share in the things that meant so much to him – the environment, conservation of the earth, love, peace, respect and making this world a better place.

John's dream was for a peaceful world and a clean world and a world without hunger. In his lifetime he managed to make these issues known to the public through his concerts and his songs. This music is his legacy and it is up to us to carry that legacy on.

Today we are planting our trees in the township of Boonah, Queensland. As usual, a plaque will be placed in front of 'John's' tree. We are also planting trees for the environment, for peace, and this year one will be planted in honour of Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, who tragically passed away recently.

Best wishes to you – enjoy your campfire sing-along.

Love and Best wishes

Janette Frawley

On behalf of Higher Ground Australia

## **Aspen 2007**

The JD event in Aspen in 2007 is already being planned.

There will a number of Australians travelling to America next year, incorporating a visit to Aspen in October. This will be an incredible experience for those who have never visited Aspen before.

For those people (like me) who have never been to Aspen, and have never really experienced high altitude or really, really cold weather, some helpful hints or packing tips might be nice. We would also appreciate any other information such as places to see and things to do in Colorado.

Unfortunately, Vegemite has been banned in the United States as it contains folate. I believe that customs will be relaxing the current laws for Australians travelling within America, allowing us to bring in Vegemite for our own personal use. Although this law appears to be harsh, we will be unable to fill any orders for Vegemite – sorry!

**We are really looking forward to meeting up with you all -**

## **THE TRAVELLING WILSONS**

We were all having a day in the city  
And decided to stop at a café for some lunch  
A TV was breaking news that Steve Irwin had been killed  
I felt I'd been hit by a knockout punch  
His commitment to wildlife and the environment was exceptional  
And his enthusiasm contagious in every way  
I know that the world has suffered along with Terri and the children,  
Its so sad he lost his life that day  
It's just a shame that the people with a passion for a better world  
Are taken so young  
And leave the rest of us to ponder  
On what might have been if they had lived to get things done

Well the Lumbago's fixed at last  
And were right to continue our trip  
But we are both a bit more wary of wildlife crossing,  
Don't want another slip  
We had a long drive down to Denmark  
But we saw a few wildflowers on the way through  
The river opens out onto a lake  
And the caravan park is on the edge of the two  
Next morning we took a look through town  
And then drove on to Walpole with forest all around  
And we did the treetop walk in the Valley of the Giants  
Only forty metres above the ground  
Carmel was behind me with a steel grip on my jacket  
With her right hand and she didn't seem too keen to talk  
And she was crushing the iron railing with her left hand  
As we slowly made our way along the walk  
But she bravely made it all the way round  
And was glad to see the end in sight  
So we bought her a certificate of achievement  
To honour her scary plight  
An ancient forest has been preserved  
And giant "Tingle Trees" reach up into the breeze  
You can walk amongst these giants of the forest  
And enjoy the splendour of the trees

Albany is a spread out sort of place around a beautiful bay  
Where seals and whales can be found  
And at "Whale World" a guide will explain  
How whaling was once the main industry of the town  
It's a sad place to visit because you can almost feel the pain  
Where the carnage of the great whales took place  
All because of mans demand for oil,

Thankfully other oils have been discovered that stopped the whaling chase

What a nice little coastal town Esperance is  
With its lookouts and beaches all about  
A former resident had told us some time ago  
Be sure to take the scenic ocean route  
And when you reach the other end  
Then turn around and come back the other way  
Because the scenery is just as spectacular in reverse  
And it was such a beautiful day  
After leaving Esperance we drove to Norseman  
Which was named after a horse we were told  
It seems the animal scuffed his hoof in the dirt  
One day and revealed a seam of gold

Now we were faced with the trip across the Nullarbor  
And it took us three days but I wouldn't try it in less  
It's a long, long time sitting behind the wheel  
And you really need to stop and rest  
Carmel's doing her bit and driving for an hour or so and giving me a spell  
She drove the longest straight road in Australia  
146.6 kilometres and did it really well

The head of the bight is on aboriginal land  
And is worth the \$10.00 each you pay  
Because the whales and their calves swim right up close  
And you can admire their friendly play  
When we finally reached Ceduna  
We were ready for a Chinese feed to save any fuss  
Just glad to make it across without a hitch was enough for both of us  
We're having two nights in Streaky Bay  
To let the bodies catch up which suits us both fine  
Because the fridge is full and there's pumpkin soup  
So that leaves the beer and the wine  
They say that time waits for no one  
And we've been on the road almost five months to the day  
Seems like it passed so slowly  
You don't even notice but it's a long time to be away  
So were both in a mind to head for home,  
We've still got a few days up our sleeve  
It will be great to see all the family again  
We've missed them like you wouldn't believe

So the next stop for us is Port Augusta  
Which will complete the circle for us 19,000 kms in 120 days  
Then it's home through Broken Hill  
And the outback NSW country towns along the way  
A strong south easterly wind nearly blew us all the way to Broken Hill  
So we stayed there for two days and nights  
To let it blow it's self out if it will  
Meanwhile we went to see the Pro Hart Museum  
Where some of his famous works are on show  
And there were three Rolls Royce motor cars out the front  
And one of them he had deliberately painted a few years ago  
Not your everyday duco job I must admit  
But certainly a moving work of art  
It must have taken some time to create it all  
It's a credit to Pro Hart  
An interesting find in Broken Hill was the monument

To the band members who played as the Titanic sunk to its watery grave  
It has a broken pillar which signifies their lives been cut down so young  
While they played on with courage so brave

My cousin Isobel lives with her family in Narromine  
So we'll call in and see them as well  
Just a power point to run the fridge  
And somewhere to park the Lumbago would be swell  
We chatted about family and friends,  
Had a game of pool and enjoyed a dinner you couldn't refuse  
It was our last night away so we had a few drinks  
And then into the Lumbago for a snooze  
Towns like Dubbo, Dunnedoo and Merriwa  
Became much more familiar to me as we passed through  
We came down via the vineyards and arrived back in Cessnock  
About 2.00pm on September twenty two  
And as the Lumbago slowly pulled into our yard  
All of our family were there to welcome us home with a smile  
We had been away for exactly five months:  
We had a great time together it was all worth while

For all the kilometres we have driven,  
Places we've been to and things we've seen around the nation  
The one thing that we can both defiantly agree on  
Is that the journey is just as nice as the destination

© Alistair Wilson 2006

Alistair recited this last part of his epic at our JD weekend at Boonah. It was lovely to see Alistair and Carmel 'Back Home Again' after five months on the road.

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.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.

## Rocky Mountain High

He was born in the summer of his twenty seventh year  
coming home to a place he'd never been before.  
He left yesterday behind him, you might say he was born again  
might say he found a key for ev'ry door.  
When he first came to the mountains his life was far away  
on the road and hangin' by a song.  
But the strings already broken and he doesn't really care  
it keeps changin' fast and it don't last for long.

But the Colorado Rocky Mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
the shadow from the starlight  
is softer than a lullabye  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado Rocky Mountain high, Colorado

He climbed Cathedral Mountains he saw silver clouds below  
he saw ev'rything as far as you can see.  
And they say that he got crazy once and he tried to touch the sun  
and he lost a friend but he kept his memory.  
Now he walks in quiet solitude the forest and the streams  
seeking grace in ev'ry step he takes.  
His sight has turned in side himself to try and understand  
the serenity of a clear blue mountain lake.

And the Colorado Rocky Mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
talk to God and listen to the casual reply

Rocky Mountain high, Colorado  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado

Now his life is full of wonder but his heart still knows some fear  
of a simple thing he cannot comprehend.  
Why they try to tear the mountains down to bring in a couple more  
more people more scars upon the land.

And the Colorado Mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
I know he'd be a poorer man  
if he never saw an eagle fly. Rocky Mountain high,  
It's a Colorado Mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
friends around the campfire  
and ev'rybody's high

Rocky Mountain high, Colorado  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado