



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

CONTACT:
Janette Frawley
hga.vic@gmail.com

<http://www.hgavic.com>

Volume 16 – Edition 3

HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – May 2019

Welcome

Sometimes I really wonder whether we will ever experience John's vision of peace. The tragic multiple bombings in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday was followed a week later by a shooting in a synagogue in the USA. John's quote, *'I believe that we are here for each other, not against each other. Everything comes from an understanding that you are a gift in my life – whoever you are, whatever our differences.'* is a very simple, yet powerful ideal. Perhaps we can achieve peace simply by listening to music. Recently I've noticed that some of the more volatile Facebook groups have been very proactive in controlling bullying comments and troll behaviours. This has been a very positive initiative, and highly commendable for all people involved; moderators and posters alike. I had to disassociate myself and HGA from a number of these groups due to the appalling comments made by some people over time. There are individuals that I will not support either on a personal or as spokesperson for HGA. I value the trust that our members have put into me and I don't take that trust for granted.

I feel that John had a great understanding of Australia and of the Australian people. His respect for and friendship with his tour manager, Max Moore and brothers Col Joye and Kevin Jacobsen may have contributed to John's ability to tap into the Australian psyche. As we commemorate our veterans each year on ANZAC Day, the 25th April, the words from *Sing Australia* come to mind. *'Some of you stand all swelled with pride, some with shattered wings'*

That one line perfectly describes the spirit of the ANZAC.

A big callout to Willie Hoevers who, as a US veteran, never forgets to mention ANZAC day during his radio show closest to April 25. It means a lot to the Australian listeners, so thank you.

A number of new stories have emerged over the past few weeks, which I've included in this newsletter. Lots of new events have also been announced for Aspen in October.

Please don't hesitate to send me links to John Denver-related stories hga.vic@gmail.com for inclusion in future newsletters.

2001 – Our First Tribute Weekend

In 2001, we held our first gathering at the Pioneer Cottages near the *Grampians National Park*, in Victoria. We were a group of strangers; most of us had not met prior to the weekend, yet the common bond of John's music bound us together from that first meeting. When I recall that first evening when we met for the first time, it was like as if we had known each other all our lives. Our annual tribute weekends have not changed much over the years. We celebrate our deep and lasting friendship with music and shared meals and we raise money for raptor rehabilitation in John's name. The last thing we do each year is to plant a tree and dedicate it to John with a plaque. Last week Tom and I spent a few relaxing days in the Grampians National Park. It had been almost 18 years since that first *Higher Ground Australia* gathering, so I was interested to see whether our tree was still alive. On ANZAC Day, we found our way down to the Pioneer Cottages and wandered through their wooded area between the little cottages where our tree was located, facing the mountains. It's been a long, hot summer and it's a little worse for wear, but it's still alive. The plaque we placed in front of the tree has also weathered the elements. Here are some pictures of the tree and the plaque from our first gathering in The Grampians, Victoria.



2019 Tribute Weekend

We will be meeting in Ballarat, Victoria in 2019. Watch this space for further details.

Annual Fundraiser

I'm still looking for ideas for a fundraiser that will raise mega-bucks for our annual donation to Higher Ground Raptors. Peggy's work with raptor rehabilitation is so very important for continued

conservation of our raptor species. I can put together a mystery raffle prize, but I'm really looking for volunteers who are going to come up with something special. All ideas will be discussed. www.highergroundraptors.com and <https://www.facebook.com/HigherGroundRaptors>.

Higher Ground Australia Website

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>.

I've started collating some photos and comments about our previous gatherings.

<https://www.hgavic.com/about-us> If anyone has photos from the first gatherings, please send them through to me. I seem to have a problem with locating some of the earlier files. The draft constitution has also been added to the page. I need our members to give it one last check and if it is all OK, I'll finalise it and re-post it on the website.

Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com with your photos, comments, and feedback.

45 years since John Denver went number one with a song inspired by Minnesota weather

Cathy Wurzer April 3 2019

John Denver's "Sunshine On My Shoulders" was number one on the Billboard pop chart 45 years ago today. Denver's first wife was Minnesota native Annie Martell, and the couple lived in Edina for several years — which is when Denver wrote this song.

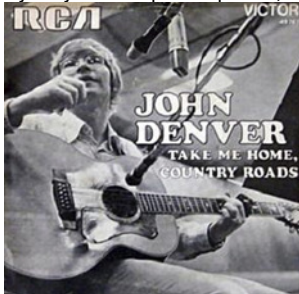
"It was one of those late-winter early-spring days. It was one of those cold, dreary days where everything is gray," Denver later told the Star Tribune. "Spring is in fact happening. That's why the song is slow and melancholy."

Click the link to listen to the story audio:

https://www.mprnews.org/listen?name=/minnesota/news/features/2019/04/03/20190403_music_20190403_64.mp3

48 years ago: John Denver's 'Take me Home, Country Roads' is released.

By Gayle Thompson April 12, 2019



(Photo: RCA Victor)

Forty-eight years ago today, on April 12, 1971, John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" was released as a single. The song is from his 1971 album Poems, Prayers & Promises. Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert originally started writing "Take Me Home, Country Roads" for

Johnny Cash. But, when Denver learned of the track, he requested to help finish it and decided to include it on one of his records.

"I played him what I had of "Country Roads," and he said, 'Wow! That's great, that's a hit song! Did you record it?'" Danoff recalls to NPR. "I said, 'No, we don't have a record deal.'"

At the time, Danoff and Nivert were both struggling musicians who were trying to make a name for themselves together. While the two may have found success by releasing "Take Me Home, Country Roads" as their own tune, neither of the songwriters regrets letting Denver have what became the biggest hit of his career.

"It wasn't a country record," Danoff maintains.

"We could've beat up Nashville and nobody would've recorded it. One thing I learned in this business is that things turn out other than you planned them to, no matter what it is. And you can't predict what's going to happen."

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" was a hit on the country charts, as well as on the all-genre Billboard Hot 100 and the Billboard Adult Contemporary charts. More than a dozen artists, including Ray Charles, Loretta Lynn, Eddy Arnold, Lynn Anderson and Daryle Singletary, have recorded cover versions of the tune; Carrie Underwood also performed the song during her 2010 Play On Tour. In 2014, the song became the official state anthem for West Virginia, and in 2016, the Country Music Association used the song as part of their all-star "[Forever Country](#)" mashup in celebration of the CMA Awards' 50th anniversary.

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" remained a staple of Denver's live shows throughout the remainder of his career. The artist passed away in 1997, when his airplane crashed in California.

"Forever Country" mashup in celebration of the CMA Awards' 50th anniversary.

If you thought the "Forever Country" single was epic, wait'll you see the music video. The clip, directed by Grammy Award-winning director Joseph Kahn, made its debut on Tuesday night (Sept. 20, 2016).

Readers can press play to see the complete "[Forever Country](#)" video, featuring appearances from Reba McEntire, Tim McGraw, Randy Travis (yes, really!) and many, many more. The all-star cast came together for the clip and single -- an impressive medley of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads," Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again" and Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" -- to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the CMA Awards.

CMA Award-winning songwriter Shane McAnally produced "Forever Country" and calls crafting the mashup "a very scary process." The tunesmith admits that he didn't think such a project would work in country music -- "[W]e tell stories. And we

can't just cut into them and take a piece" -- but as the idea began to take shape, he saw how the iconic songs could all work together.

"When you play ["I Will Always Love You"] over "Take Me Home, Country Roads," they somehow take on a life together, and it feels almost like you're speaking more to the music, and to country music specifically, when you say, 'I will always love you.' It feels meant to be," McAnally explains, adding that, when it came to "On the Road Again," "The line 'The life I love is making music with my friends' kept coming into my mind, and "On the Road Again" felt essential."

"Forever Country" is available for download on iTunes; proceeds are going to the CMA Foundation's music education work.

[Go Behind the Scenes](#) of "Forever Country"

Mountain mama! John Denver's 'Take Me Home, Country Roads' was inspired by Maryland, not West Virginia

Chris Kaltenbach The Baltimore Sun, April 17, 2019

Next time you hear John Denver warbling "Take Me Home, Country Roads" — or hear the group Spank perform it in the trailer for the video game [Fallout 76](#), a version that has become a hit and an earworm over the past year or so since it came out — keep in mind that it wasn't anywhere in West Virginia that inspired the massive hit, but rather a road in Montgomery County.

Songwriter Bill Danoff, in a 1997 article he wrote for The Washington Post (in tribute to Denver, who'd just died), said he had begun writing the song while driving to a family reunion along Clopper Road, near Gaithersburg. He and his future wife, Taffy Nivert, completed the song in December 1970 with Denver's help. "Back then," Danoff wrote, Clopper Road "was still a country road." (It isn't anymore, apparently, thanks to development over the past 49 years.)

The three premiered the song the following night at Washington, D.C.'s The Cellar Door, where Denver was headlining (Danoff and Nivert, performing under the name Fat City, were his opening act). "When we first sang the song together," Danoff wrote, "it seemed as though the audience would never stop applauding. Next show, same thing. We knew we had a hit."

John Denver - Take Me Home, Country Roads
John Denver's official audio for 'Take Me Home, Country Roads', as featured on Fallout 76. Click to listen to more John Denver:

<https://lnk.to/JohnDenverPlaylistYA>

Wrote Denver, in "Take Me Home," his 1994 autobiography, "In the wee hours of the morning, sometime between Christmas and New Year's Eve, in their basement apartment in Washington, D.C., we wrote 'Take Me Home, Country Roads.' It became my first Number One record."

No word on why Maryland lost out to West Virginia in the lyrics. Perhaps "Maryland" just

doesn't sound as pastoral as its western neighbor. More likely, the three syllables that combine for our state's name just don't fit the meter the songwriters had worked out.

(Some sources suggest Denver considered using "Massachusetts" instead of "West Virginia." Good thing he didn't, or crazed Red Sox fans might be singing it between innings. An ode to Massachusetts also would never have been named a state song of West Virginia, a status "Take Me Home, County Roads" has enjoyed since 2014.)

Denver, of course, went on to great fame and popularity, not the least sign of which is the continuing presence of his version of "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" during the seventh-inning stretch at Orioles games. He died in an October 1997 plane crash in Northern California.

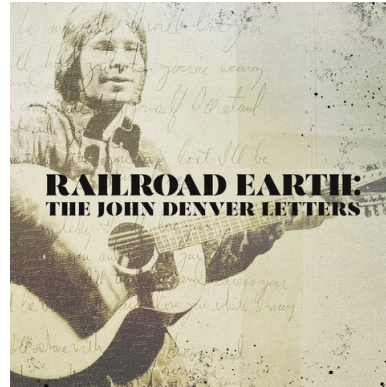
Danoff and Nivert married in 1972. Four years later, as two of the four members of Starland Vocal Band, they had a number-one hit with "Afternoon Delight," which, thankfully, no state has embraced as its signature song.

ckaltenbach@baltsun.com

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/baltimore-insider-blog/bs-fe-take-me-home-20190416-story.html>

Hear Railroad Earth's New John Denver Song "If You Will Be My Lady"

By Brittney McKenna April 18, 2019



In 2017, the estate of John Denver came across a batch of previously unknown lyrics by the beloved songwriter. Realizing the songs needed to be heard, Denver's team tapped Railroad Earth to set two of the songs — "If You Will Be My Lady" and "Through The Night" — to music.

Both tracks will be released as a 7-inch single (as well as a digital 7 inch) titled Railroad Earth: The John Denver Letters on Earth Day (April 22), a date chosen to honor Denver's work as an environmentalist. Ahead of the official release, Railroad Earth is premiering one of the tracks, "If You Will Be My Lady," (click link).

"There's such a unique and wonderful opportunity — and responsibility — to finishing someone's thoughts, while also making them part of your own," Railroad Earth's Carey Harmon says. "I

think Todd [Sheaffer] has accomplished that. These are not cover songs. They are John's words and definitely carry his spirit, but they are distinctly interpreted in Todd's voice, and therefore felt completely natural for the band to gather around ... John Denver represented so much to so many people, and it's very exciting to think how these may be received. He was a man that never fit entirely into a mold, revered by the folk music community, while reaching beyond it in his own way."

A portion of the proceeds from Railroad Earth: The John Denver Letters will benefit Youth Climate Strike, a youth-led movement seeking to raise awareness of climate change and encouraging action to curb it.

<https://americansongwriter.com/2019/04/hear-railroad-earths-new-john-denver-song-if-you-will-be-my-lady/>

Olivia Newton-John claims she's haunted by two dead celebrities who boost her career

Olivia Newton-John has claimed that she's haunted by two dead celebrities who do their bit to help her career. The Grease star says her late famous pals hover around her while she's performing and act as her spirit guides to ensure she always goes down a treat with audiences. The musical legend says both Karen Carpenter, the Carpenters singer who died in 1983, and John Denver, the singer-songwriter who died in 1997, are on stage with her every single time. Olivia, 70, talks about her ghostly companions, which also include a friend's daughter who died as a child, in her new book Don't Stop Believin', reports the Daily Star . She writes: "She has been with me ever since, along with my parents, my sister and other close friends who have passed away, like Karen Carpenter and John Denver.

"I often feel as if they hover around me when I perform. They are my spirit guides who I ask to support me before every show and they keep me strong. They're gone, but their love never dies." The star also writes about the tough time she had when Karen died of heart failure caused by eating disorder anorexia. "It was as if the sky fell to Earth," she said. "My stomach hit the ground." She was supposed to be seeing her friend the following day.

Olivia, who is fighting cancer for a third time, also writes about performing for Princess Diana alongside Sir Cliff Richard in 1988. She says the princess was "beautiful and charming" and that she could "feel the kindness in her eyes".

TRIBUTE ARTISTS

Check out your favourite tribute artists to see where and when they are performing:

Mark Cormican

Mark Cormican has released his 2019 concert schedule, starting on the 9th March in Colorado. Check his website for more information.

<http://markcormican.com/schedule/>

Jim Curry

Jim and Anne Curry have released their 2019 concert schedule. Check out their website for their concert schedule:

<https://www.jimcurrymusic.com/future-concerts/>

Back Home Again

A tribute to John Denver.

Tom Becker is a former member of the Legendary Folk Group, The New Christy Minstrels, and has gone on to appear with Grammy Winners and Music Legends including Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Gregg Allman and Jerry Jeff Walker.

Tom Becker has released his 2019 concert schedule, which can be accessed by clicking the link below.

<http://www.johndenvertribute.net/schedule.htm>

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon have released their 2019/2020 concert schedule All concert information can be found on their website;

<https://bouldercanyonband.com/concert-schedule>

Chris Westfall

Chris Westfall has released his event listings for his forthcoming concerts in the Northern Spring and Summer. To check out whether he is playing at a venue near you, please click the link to his website.

<http://www.chriswestfall.com/inConcert.php>

John Adams

John Adams is currently touring in the Netherlands. Please check his website for information about his concerts and for tickets.

<https://www.johnadamsband.com/calendar>

Rick Worrall

Canadian artist, Rick Worrall, together with Lee Holdridge and local symphony orchestras present *Rocky Mountain High: An Evening of John Denver.*

Concerts will be held in Victoria BC, Nanaimo BC, in May and Hamilton ON, and Toronto ON in June. Click the link for information about tickets.

<http://rockymountainhighconcert.com/concerts/>

For more information about tribute artists around the globe, check out our website;

www.hgavic.com

ASPEN IN OCTOBER 2019

The plans for the 2019 Aspen in October tribute are well underway. Listed below are some of the concerts and activities announced to date. Ticket prices have been included when known. This will be updated during the year as more information comes to hand.

Tuesday October 8

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Wednesday October 9

12pm

Meet and Greet
John Denver Sanctuary
470 Rio Grande Pl, Aspen, Colorado 81611
A memorial service for Susan Leaver will be conducted after the Meet and Greet. All welcome.

4:00-6:00pm

Aspen Meadow Band
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Thursday October 10

1-3pm

David Stratford
Mountain Chalet

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Friday October 11

11:30am

Jim Horn's Adventures with John Denver
Mountain Chalet, Aspen (5th Floor)
Tickets at the door

7:00-9:00pm

Ron Matthews
Mountain Chalet, Aspen

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Saturday October 12

12pm

4th Annual Singer/Songwriter Event
Mountain Chalet, Aspen

4:00-6:00pm

Aspen Meadow Band
Limelight Lodge, 228 E Cooper Ave, Aspen,
Colorado 81611

7:30pm

22nd Anniversary Musical Tribute to John Denver
Wheeler Opera House
320 E Hyman Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611
Tickets \$50-\$70

<https://aspenshowtix.com/Online/default.asp>

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Sunday October 13

11:00-2:30pm

Pine Creek Cookhouse lunch & Concert with
Chris Collins & Friends
12500 Castle Creek Road, Aspen, Colorado
81611

Tickets \$85. Contact Suzanne at
mountainsrose312@gmail.com

4:00-6:00pm

Jam at the Chapel with Mack Bailey and Chris
Nole

Aspen Chapel, 77 Meadowood Dr., Aspen, CO
81611

Tickets \$25

<https://chrisnole.com/event/2693683/496930126/jam-at-the-chapel>

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Monday October 14

10am

Goodbye Again
Wagner Park
300 S Monarch St, Aspen

This month, I've selected the lyrics *Sing Australia*, to celebrate everything that is good about Australia and John, who was able to put those attributes into a song for our bicentenary in 1988.

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.

Sing Australia

(John Denver)

*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 baime
The legends of a dream time 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*