



table talk

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"The Day I Banned One of My Favorite Singers"

It was late summer in 1977 when I packed away the vinyls and 8-tracks of one of my favorite musicians. I had listened with pleasure for several years, but I couldn't take it anymore.

It was time to finally deal with Henry John Deutschendorf Jr.

It wasn't easy because 33 of his songs or albums were "Certified Gold." Even today, the consensus is that HJD Jr. is still one of the most beloved entertainers of his era. He sang about the wonder and joy of nature, his disdain for city life, and simple but loving relationships. Banning him from my life was not an easy thing to do. When he came on the radio, I turned it off. I wouldn't watch him on TV either. My roommate felt exactly the same way and joined the ban as well. Actually, it started with him. Let me explain what happened.

(Oh, by the way, I forgot to mention that Deutschendorf changed his professional name to John Denver - so maybe you've heard of him by that moniker).

When my friend Terry Wasden and I left home and headed to Missouri for Seminary we were mega homesick. It wasn't like our college days when we could easily get home for a weekend. It was a long two-day drive, and we didn't have the option to easily come and go anymore.

After a few days we secured an apartment and got part-time jobs to meet expenses as we took on full loads at school.

Before the days of cell phones, every call home incurred a long-distance charge. I missed Mother and Daddy. I missed ministry. I had no girlfriend and no prospects at the time. So when I came home, I put on the John Denver LPs. I noticed that Terry would do the same thing. A couple of times one of us would catch the other one crying as Denver sang his ballads.

There was only one way to deal with it. John Denver and his music would be banned from our lives! Not forever, but at least until we could get within striking distance of home.

It turned out to be a good decision, but let me tell you how the ban was lifted.

When we finished school and were moving back home, we played John's greatest hits. Not until we reached Mobile, Alabama did we feel we were close enough to West Florida to risk it. But I cranked up the old 8-track to nearly full volume. Before long we found ourselves singing with John at the top of our homesick lungs: "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "Back Home Again." "Annie's Song" convinced us we had wives waiting for us somewhere and even "Grandma's Feather Bed" was comforting.

Well, John is gone now. Unfortunately, an airplane crash took his life in 1997. I still love his music. It still makes me miss what my grandson calls "the olden days." But I have learned something about life from those old songs. It's good to look back. **I'm so thankful my life was good enough to look back on with tears of joy. But I've found lately that I am looking forward more than I look back. I'm remembering that Heaven is real, and the idea of eternity is meaning more to me as the days go by.**

The Apostle John wrote "Loved Ones, we are already God's children, but He has not yet shown us fully what we shall be like when Jesus returns. Even so, we can be sure that we will be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is, and in His fullness." (1 John 3:2 in my words)

Paul echoed the same idea: "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Romans 8:18 assures us, "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later."

So, keep celebrating what God has done, but don't forget the best is yet to come!

"Take me HOME, Country Roads!"

I love you,
Pastor Stephen